

Marketplace Mythology of the Finnish Sauna – Employment and Reproduction of Sauna Myths

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Tiia Eteläkoski
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Department of Marketing
Aalto University
School of Economics

Author Tiia Eteläkoski

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore sauna mythology and understand how contemporary Finnish consumers experience and employ sauna myths as well as reproduce those myths by conducting sauna activities and rituals. More specifically, the key elements of the Finnish sauna mythology are studied by making an overview of historical and contemporary literature relating to sauna. After discovering the central key elements of sauna mythology, the employment and reproduction of sauna myths by contemporary Finnish consumers is explored.

For centuries sauna has been a vital part of Finnish culture and considered, to some extent, sacred. Even though sauna culture has persisted until this day, sauna-related myths have changed or gained different meanings as consumers shape and reproduce myths as they consume. While there is consumer research focusing on Finnish sauna mythology and consumption within the sauna context, the employment and reproduction of sauna myths by consumers hasn't gained attention in the academic world. As a theoretical framework, marketplace mythologies, together with consumption rituals are explored. The theoretical framework is secondarily supplemented by the theory of the sacred, and the theory of experiencing nature.

The methodological framework primarily draws on the theory of marketplace mythologies. The framework serves as a platform for discovering how Finnish consumers reproduce myths that are passed on as a sociocultural heritage. The study is ethnographic by nature using semi-structured multigenerational interviews as the main data collection method. Conducting multigenerational interviews assists in gaining deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon. A brief overview of historical and contemporary literature on the Finnish sauna culture, and more specifically sauna mythology, is conducted in order to gain wider understanding of key elements emerging from the collected data. In addition, a literature review of sauna culture helps to understand the heritage of sauna mythology and how those myths have evolved into well-established traditions. Secondarily the data is collected by engaging in the discussion of sauna in real-life settings.

The study enlightens our understanding of how sauna myths are employed and reproduced through consumers' beliefs and rituals in the sauna context. A strong nexus between sauna consumption and the mythological beliefs was discovered. In addition, empirical evidences indicated how recurrent sauna rituals endorse sauna mythology and consumers' emotional connection to sauna. In order to accommodate sauna mythology to values and needs of contemporary society rituals were noted to be utilized as vehicles in the myth reproduction. The most significant sauna-related myths identified were the myth of Finnishness, the myth of the sacred, the myth of returning to nature and the myth of mental and physical healing. Finnishness was identified to be the most dominant myth extolling a Finn as the truest sauna bather. Especially in connection with summer cottage, saunas were found to represent the return to nature and primitivism. The informants also emphasize ultimate purity attained after a sauna bath that reflects the myth of returning to nature. Moreover, the myth of mental and physical healing properties of sauna was identified as sauna was considered as the preeminent relaxation place.

Keywords myths, marketplace mythology, rituals, consumer culture theory, consumer research

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Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus oli kartoittaa saunan mytologiaa ja saavuttaa ymmärrys siitä, kuinka nykyajan suomalaiset kuluttajat kokevat, käyttävät ja edelleen jalostavat saunamyyttejä saunaan liittyvien aktiviteettien ja rituaalien kautta. Suomalaisen saunamytologian merkittävimpiä elementtejä kartoitettiin tekemällä ensin kirjallisuuskatsaus historian ja nykyajan saunakulttuuriin. Kirjallisuuskatsauksen pohjalta toteutettiin empiirinen tutkimus, jonka avulla tunnistettiin saunaan liittyvät keskeisimmät myytit ja luotiin ymmärrys siitä, kuinka suomalaiset kuluttajat edelleen jalostavat näitä myyttejä.

Jo vuosisatojen ajan sauna on ollut tärkeä osa suomalaista kulttuuria ja sauna onkin saavuttanut statuksen jossain määrin pyhänä instituutiona. Saunaan liittyvät myytit ovat aikojen saatossa muuntuneet ja saaneet uusia merkityksiä yhteiskunnallisten ja kuluttajakulttuurillisten muutosten myötä. Vaikka saunan mytologiaan ja kuluttamiseen liittyviä kuluttajatutkimuksia on tehty aiemminkin, ei saunamyyttien käyttö ja edelleen jalostus kuluttajanäkökulmasta ole aiemmin saanut akateemista näkyvyyttä.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehiksenä käytettiin kuluttajakulttuuriin liittyviä teorioita markkinapaikkamytologioista ja kulutusrituaaleista. Täydentävinä ja ymmärrystä lisäävinä osina teoreettiseen viitekehykseen valittiin teoriat pyhydestä ja luontokokemuksista. Markkinapaikkamytologiaan liittyvä teoria toimi tutkimuksen ensisijaisena perustana luotaessa ymmärrystä tutkimuskohteesta. Tutkimus oli luonteeltaan etnografinen ja pääasiallisena tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin puolistrukturoitua haastattelua. Vaikka tutkimuksen tavoitteena ei ollut tulosten yleistettävyys, edustivat haastateltavat eri sukupolvia syvemmän ymmärryksen saavuttamiseksi. Toissijaisesti tutkimustietoja kerättiin osallistumalla saunaan liittyviin keskusteluihin arkielämän tilanteissa.

Tämä tutkimus syventää ymmärrystämme siitä, kuinka kuluttajat käyttävät ja edelleen jalostavat saunamyyttejä uskomusten pohjalta ja rituaalisen käyttäytymisen kautta. Tutkimuksen yksi keskeisimmistä löydöksistä oli vahva yhteys saunan kulutuksen ja mytologisten uskomusten välillä. Lisäksi löydökset osoittivat, että toistuvat saunarituaalit tukevat saunamytologiaa ja kuluttajien tunnesidettä saunaan. Rituaaleja havaittiin käytettävän saunamytologian sovittamisessa ja mukauttamisessa nyky-yhteiskunnan arvoja ja ideaaleja vastaavaksi. Tutkimuksessa havaitut keskeisimmät saunamyytit olivat suomalaisuuden myytti, pyhyden myytti, myytti ”luontoon palaamisesta”, sekä henkisen ja fyysisen parantumisen myytti. Tutkimustulosten perusteella suomalaisuuden myytti on vahvin ja ilmeisin saunamyytti. Tämän myytin havaittiin ylistävän saunaa suomalaisena keksintönä, sekä julistavan suomalaiset todellisiksi ja ylivertaisiksi saunojiksi. Myytin ”luontoon palaamisesta” havaittiin kuvastavan pakoa urbaanista, hektisestä ja teknologian täyttämästä arkielämästä luonnon, puhtauden ja primitiivisyyden tyyssijoille. Tämä myytti oli ilmeisin kesämökkeilyn yhteydessä. Lisäksi liittyen myyttiin ”luontoon palaamisesta”, haastateltavien huomattiin painottavan äärimmäistä puhtautta, jonka voi saavuttaa vain saunomalla.

Avainsanat myytit, markkinapaikkamytologia, rituaalit, kuluttajakulttuuri, kulttuurinen kuluttajatutkimus

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	6
1.1	Background.....	8
1.2	Research problems and research questions	10
1.3	Objectives	11
1.4	Outline of the study	11
2	Literature review	13
2.1	Marketplace Mythologies	14
2.1.1	<i>Genealogy of Marketplace Mythology</i>	<i>15</i>
2.1.2	<i>Consumer Myths.....</i>	<i>17</i>
2.1.3	<i>Cultural meanings and Counteremory in Commercial Myths.....</i>	<i>19</i>
2.1.4	<i>Discourses of Power and Power Resistance</i>	<i>21</i>
2.2	Rituals	22
2.2.1	<i>Definition of Ritual.....</i>	<i>23</i>
2.2.2	<i>Ritual elements.....</i>	<i>25</i>
2.2.3	<i>Typology of Rituals</i>	<i>26</i>
2.2.4	<i>Ritual Vitality</i>	<i>31</i>
2.3	The Sacred.....	33
2.3.1	<i>Two-way process of sacralizing and secularizing.....</i>	<i>34</i>
2.3.2	<i>Sacred Consumer Domains.....</i>	<i>35</i>
2.3.3	<i>Characterizing the Sacred</i>	<i>36</i>
2.3.4	<i>Sacred Consumption.....</i>	<i>38</i>
2.4	Experience of Nature	39
2.4.1	<i>Romantic Discourses of Nature.....</i>	<i>40</i>
2.4.2	<i>Assembling Nature through Consumption Resources</i>	<i>41</i>
2.4.3	<i>Conflicts and Betrayals in Assemblages of Nature.....</i>	<i>43</i>
2.4.4	<i>Purifying Practices.....</i>	<i>45</i>
3	Overview of Finnishness and Sauna Culture.....	48
3.1	Finnishness	49
3.1.1	<i>National Identity and Self-image</i>	<i>49</i>
3.1.2	<i>Egalitarian Individualism.....</i>	<i>51</i>
3.2	History of the Finnish Sauna	52
3.2.1	<i>Origins in Russian and European Sauna Cultures.....</i>	<i>53</i>
3.2.2	<i>The Finnish Sauna Emerges.....</i>	<i>54</i>
3.3	Consumption of Different Sauna Types.....	56
3.3.1	<i>Sauna Types.....</i>	<i>57</i>
3.3.2	<i>Sauna - an Essential Part of Summer Cottage Life.....</i>	<i>58</i>
3.4	Characterizing the Finnish Sauna Culture.....	60
3.4.1	<i>Roles of Sauna in the Past.....</i>	<i>61</i>
3.4.2	<i>Purity</i>	<i>62</i>
3.4.3	<i>Nature Relatedness and Primitivism</i>	<i>64</i>
3.4.4	<i>Mental and Physical Healing Properties</i>	<i>65</i>
4	Methodology.....	67
4.1	Research Design	67
4.2	Data Collection	69
4.2.1	<i>Interviewees.....</i>	<i>71</i>
4.2.2	<i>Interviews.....</i>	<i>71</i>

4.3	Analyzing and Interpreting the Data	72
5	Findings.....	74
5.1	Sauna as a Marketplace for Mythologies.....	76
5.1.1	<i>Finnish Sauna Consumption</i>	78
5.1.2	<i>Socialization in the Sauna</i>	81
5.2	Finnishness	83
5.2.1	<i>Sauna – Part of the National Identity</i>	86
5.2.2	<i>Sauna as a Finnish Heritage</i>	89
5.2.3	<i>Myth of the Finnish man</i>	90
5.3	The Sacred.....	93
5.3.1	<i>Veneration of the Sauna</i>	93
5.3.2	<i>Holiday Celebrations</i>	95
5.3.3	<i>Mystical Power of ‘Löyly’</i>	97
5.3.4	<i>Boundary Crossing</i>	99
5.4	Return to Nature.....	101
5.4.1	<i>Nature-relatedness</i>	101
5.4.2	<i>Primitivism</i>	105
5.4.3	<i>Purity</i>	107
5.5	Myth of Healing.....	110
5.5.1	<i>Physical Healing</i>	110
5.5.2	<i>Mental Healing</i>	113
6	Discussion	115
6.1	Marketplace Mythology.....	116
6.2	The Nexus between Consumer Myths and Consumption Rituals	117
6.3	The Sacred.....	120
6.4	Experience of Nature	121
7	Conclusion.....	125
7.1	Research Summary.....	126
7.2	Contributions	128
7.2.1	<i>Theoretical Implications</i>	128
7.2.2	<i>Managerial Implications</i>	131
7.3	Limitations of the Research	133
7.4	Suggestions for Further Research.....	134
	References	137
	Appendix 1. Interview Structure	140

1 Introduction

According to mythological concepts, Finns are forest people who hail from the woodlands and lack intellectual capacity (Peltonen 2000). Even though this stereotype does not scientifically hold true, Finns are nature-loving people who like silence, relaxation and authentic scenery. Finns especially love taking a sauna (Peltonen 2000; Turun Sanomat 6/2015). According to Peltonen (2000) the existence of myths is not supported by bare facts, but instead persists because of their usefulness and function in telling stories about our origins and the meaning of life itself. The mythology and myths relating to Finnish sauna can be regarded as a socio-cultural heritage that is passed on from generation to generation (Suomen Saunaseura ry). In the middle of 17th century the first professor of history and moral philosophy at the Academy of Turku, Mikael Wexionius, paid attention to Finnish Sauna behavior; “all the Finns are diligent sauna bathers rushing out from the sauna even in the coldest freeze to pour water from the well or lake on to their naked bodies” (Suomen Saunaseura ry). Therefore, according to Wexionius, Finns will have their body parts toughened and their bodies are better able to endure hard work (Suomen Saunaseura ry).

According to Suomen Saunaseura ry, sauna has been a vital part of Finnish culture for centuries and, as a place, the sauna is considered sacred in the minds of Finns. Most of the Finns mistakenly consider sauna to be an entirely Finnish invention, and the most enthusiastic sauna bathers regard sauna as a patriotic institution defining who the Finns are (Suomen Saunaseura ry). Nevertheless, the history of sauna is not an ancient story of Finnishness but rather a mixture of influences from the western medieval sauna culture and eastern Russian sauna culture (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Even though the concept of the sauna was well-known around Europe in the Middle Ages, in the 17th century, as the number of public saunas increased, the perception of sauna was changed into one of an unhealthy and depraved habit in the Middle-Europe (Vuorenjuuri 1967). By the 19th century, European sauna culture disappeared, yet, at the same time, in Finland, taking a sauna gained ground as part of the nation’s cultural heritage. Oftentimes it was the only hygienic place in the home, where to give birth, cleanse or purify a deceased family member (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

Taking a sauna in the countryside has remained a special characteristic of Finnish culture, and nowadays the summer cottage culture is strongly associated with sauna culture (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Heinonen & Peltonen (2013) suggest that as summer cottages are usually more primitive than urban homes, and often lacking running water taking sauna might be the only place to get clean. Taking a sauna is an especially significant summer cottage activity, since summer cottages are generally considered to be places free of technology and other usual in-home activities. Thus, the sauna expresses a return to primitivism and an escape from the modern world (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Through romantic and mythic discourses, sauna is nowadays portrayed as a vehicle for returning to nature and cultivating a more natural lifestyle. In addition to being an important part of summer cottage activities, sauna is an essential part of holidays such as Christmas and Midsummer. For example, during the feast of Midsummer, saunas are decorated with birch saplings and the partaking of a sauna at this time is infused with the beliefs and traditions that spring from sauna mythology (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

The romantic mythology behind sauna culture is vast and spellbinding and most visibly enacted through rituals. Even though sauna has these positive connotations, the devil and the spirits of the deceased are oftentimes mentioned when defining how to act in the sauna (Suomen Saunaseura ry). For example, it has been said that a man should not take a sauna after six on Saturdays due to the threat of evil, even though sauna otherwise is considered the most sacred place at home and described as a warm, comforting lap (Suomen Saunaseura ry). If the rule of not taking a sauna after six on Saturdays is disobeyed the devil might appear and punish the bather, or the spirits of the deceased might be lured to take an evening sauna (Suomen Saunaseura ry). Throughout the Finnish history sauna has been considered a place where one can purify one's soul, and according to mythology a soul rests in sauna (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). As a matter of fact, the Finno-Ugric word '*löyly*' meant not only the steam rising from the stove but, also a human's soul (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

1.1 Background

As the Finnish sauna culture still has a strong historical, communal and mythological connotation, studies related to sauna are extremely interesting not only from the anthropological, engineering or medical perspective but also from the consumer culture perspective. K.F Hirvensalo and Risto Lundgren conducted the first pioneering studies related to the Finnish sauna in 1933. Hirvensalo concentrated on the bacteriology of smoke saunas and Lundgren contemplated the medical aspects of taking a sauna (Särkikoski 2012). After the study conducted by Lundgren there has been plenty of medical research studying the health impacts of sauna; e.g. in 2015, cardiology specialist Jari Laukkanen examined the relationship between cardiogenic deaths and taking a sauna, and came to the conclusion that the longer and more often a man stays in the sauna, the smaller the risk of premature death (Helsingin Sanomat). Research by Nina Harjulin (2012) concentrated on the Finnish sauna culture from the consumer culture perspective. Harjulin studied the Finns and their practices by using practice theory and studies of place consumption as a basis.

The number of studies related to rituals and mythologies is vast, and the fields studied range from anthropology to management. One of the most intriguing research studies relating to myths and consumer culture theory is Säkjärvi's (2013) Master's thesis on myths of masculinity in luxury advertising – constructing an ideal male consumer. In the thesis, Säkjärvi (2013) studied how myths are related to masculinity, and how the myths are used in luxury advertising. Säkjärvi also discusses the changes in the three myths identified, noting that the myths of masculinity were transformed simultaneously with contemporary beliefs and values. A dissertation composed by Sredl (2009) examining consumption-based family rituals and consumer pride also touches on the subject of myths that are kept alive by group learning and by engaging in rituals. Sredl (2009) argues that continuous and consumption-based family rituals, such as Sunday family dinner, evoke the expression of emotions, more specifically emotion of pride. In the chapter of findings, Sredl (2009) presents three key components of rituals eliciting pride and reinforcing group hierarchies: time, aesthetic goods and family. The dissertation concludes that one of the reasons for consumers to exercise rituals is to generate pride, which can also be obtained through shared experiences at a cultural level.

The theoretical framework is primarily constructed from theories of marketplace mythologies and rituals. Supplementary to the framework, theories of experiencing nature as well as the sacred are viewed. The perspective of marketplace mythologies is reviewed mainly through two scientific articles. The first of which introduces cultural myths as components in the creation of marketplace mythologies through narrative work (Thompson 2004). Drawing from his study of the natural health marketplace, Thompson (2004) suggests the juxtapositions of Romantic and Gnostic mythoi and metaphors don't necessarily create an offsetting context but instead might coexist in a marketplace, in which new competing ideological interests are produced through marketplace mythologies. In his article, Thompson (2004) also presents the enchanted cultural countermemory as the savior of natural health marketplace, bolstering the fusion of Gnostic and Romantic mythoi, and notes how mythologized products convey discourses of power. Written by Belk & Costa (1998), the second article employed in the theoretical framework reviewed the modern mountain man rendezvous as a ritualistic leisure activity drawing from the mythical past and providing an escape from everyday reality. Belk & Costa (1998) presented the rendezvous as a consumption experience providing the return to the primitive and creating sacred time and place through, *inter alia*, shared rituals. In addition, cultural meanings as a vehicle for mythical narratives are observed through an article by Peñaloza (2000).

The theoretical framework of rituals is principally introduced through studies and articles contributed by researchers such as Fernandez, Veer & Lastovicka (2011), Marshall (2005), Rook (1985) and Wallendorf & Arnould (1991). Fernandez et al. (2011) approach rituals by studying gift giving, rites of passage and boundary crossing in diasporic Hindu wedding ritual whereas Marshall (2005) explored rituals, routines and conventions related to food. Rook's (1985) perspective on rituals is more fundamental and wide-ranging explaining the concept of ritual dimensions. Lastly Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) contribute to the theory of rituals through detailed study on consumption rituals of Thanksgiving. The sacred in contrast to the profane is observed through an article written by Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry (1989). The notion of the sacred is presented in order to comprehend the sacredness of sauna, which is oftentimes detached from the profane in everyday life. The harnessing of material geography and nature through consumer-culture resources and the conflict between consumption dimensions and romantic discourse of nature are observed through an article written by Canniford & Shankar (2013). The

reason for presenting experiences of nature as a supplementary theory is the prominent existence of the return to nature in discourses related to taking a sauna.

1.2 Research problems and research questions

Although sauna culture and traditions have persisted to this day, the myths might have changed or gained different meanings as consumers shape and reproduce myths as they consume. In comparison with more visible aspects of sauna culture such as traditions and rituals, the mythology behind the sauna culture is more abstract and difficult to comprehend. As consumers conduct sauna activities, sauna myths can be considered to guide those activities. Nevertheless, it can be obscure even for an experienced sauna consumer to recognize the myths behind his or her consumption activities, and how these myths impact consumption behavior related to taking a sauna. Although sauna activities and traditions are defined by culturally inherited mythology, Finnish consumers also act as developers of mythology by reproducing sauna myths. While some mythologies thrive for centuries, in order to meet the needs and wishes of contemporary society, consumers adapt myths over a long period of time.

While there is research focusing on Finnish sauna mythology and sauna consumption, the reproduction of myths by Finnish consumers hasn't yet been researched. Thus, the study focuses on how Finnish consumers experience and employ sauna myths and, moreover, how they reproduce the myths by engaging in sauna activities and rituals. The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of theories of marketplace mythologies and consumption rituals. Secondly myths are examined from the perspective of what is held sacred and how the experience of nature, consisting of primitivism and purity, relates to the Finnish sauna consumption and mythology.

The most dominant research questions are:

1. What kinds of myths are related to taking a sauna?
2. How do consumers employ and reproduce sauna myths?
3. How do the consumption rituals relating to taking a sauna demonstrate sauna mythology and assist in reproducing sauna myths?

4. Is the notion of sacred incorporated in sauna marketplace mythology? If so, how does the sacredness occur?
5. How do consumers' experiences of nature relate to taking a sauna and are there any contradictions in experiencing nature through sauna consumption?

1.3 Objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to discover contemporary, sauna-related myths that are employed and reproduced by Finnish consumers and passed on as a sociocultural heritage. Firstly, the objective is to identify prevailing sauna myths and find out how Finnish consumers experience those myths in their everyday sauna activities. Secondly, the objective is to discover how Finnish consumers employ and reproduce sauna myths by consuming sauna. The mythology of sauna is studied and linked to contemporary Finnish sauna culture by taking an overview of historical and contemporary literature on the Finnish sauna culture. After the overview, the studied phenomenon is researched by interviewing representatives of different generations on, inter alia, how they experience myths in conducting sauna activities, what the rules and the norms are that guide interviewees' sauna behavior, and how the interviewees act in sauna.

1.4 Outline of the study

The thesis begins with an introduction, which unveils the background of the topic; the chapter summarizes the essence, mythology and history of the Finnish sauna culture. After the short summary of saunas, the first chapter briefly introduces the current situation regarding existing sauna studies and the background of mythology-related theories within the consumer culture theory. The first chapter also includes research problems and questions, as well as the objectives of the thesis, ending with the outline of the study. The second chapter presents the literature review based on the chosen studies of marketplace mythology and rituals. The sacred and the experience of nature are selected to supplement the framework, since both theoretical perspectives are tightly related to mythology and the rituals of taking a sauna.

The second chapter is followed by an overview of Finnishness and sauna culture. Finnishness is discussed in order to form an understanding of the basis of sauna culture and why sauna culture is often immediately associated with Finnishness. The overview of sauna culture consists of the history of the Finnish sauna, sauna consumption and the most essential beliefs and rituals related to sauna. In the fourth chapter, the methodology is presented in sections on research design, data collection and analysis of the data. The chapter introduces how the ethnographic study was conducted by using semi-structured multigenerational interviews as the main data collection method. After the chapter on methodology, the findings are presented and discussed. The thesis ends with the conclusion, including the research summary, contributions, limitations and future research suggestions.

2 Literature review

The key concepts and the basis for the theoretical background spring from consumer culture theory (CCT), which designates the complexity of relationships between consumer agency and the marketplace. Marketplace cultures are societies, which are embodied in shared practices and values and co-created by the members of the marketplace. Although the standpoint on culture is not invented by consumer culture theory, CCT has brought to light and affirmed novel aspects on “[.] ...how particular manifestations of consumer culture are constituted, sustained, transformed, and shaped by broader historical forces (such as cultural narratives, myths, and ideologies) and grounded in specific socioeconomic circumstances and marketplace systems.” (Arnould & Thompson 2005).

Since the concept of culture consists of shared values, meanings, rituals, norms and traditions within a society, consumption activities and commodities are used as social markers demonstrating consumers belonging in a collective cultural group (Solomon et al. 2010). In particular, experiential consumption activities, such as fandom or skydiving, are proven to promote the collectiveness of a certain group through common mythologies, rituals, consumption practices and beliefs (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Culture guides consumption rituals and provides an interpretation context in which cultural meanings and established traditions are created (Fernandez et al. 2011). Then again, cultural meanings then again contribute to mythical narratives (Peñaloza 2000). In addition, Arnould & Thompson (2005) suggest that marketplaces are essential fundaments for mythical and symbolic resources, which are used by the consumers in order to construct narratives of identity.

This chapter presents theories of marketplace mythologies and rituals that provide a theoretical framework for the subject of sauna culture studied here. In the framework rituals are perceived primarily as a medium epitomizing myths and conveying cultural meanings. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of values, meanings and mythology related to sauna culture, the theories of the sacred and the experiencing of nature are also observed. First in the literature review, marketplace mythologies are introduced through a study conducted by Thompson (2004) who, drawing from the genealogy of marketplace mythology, presents how media and consumers

articulate marketplace mythology. Another primary theoretical article consulted, in order to gain an understanding of marketplace mythology, is written by Belk & Costa (1998), who reviewed the modern mountain man rendezvous as a ritualistic leisure activity drawing from the mythical past and creating sacred time and place. After the orientation on marketplace mythologies the chapter moves to theories of rituals. Rituals are principally observed through articles concentrating on diasporic Hindu wedding rituals and boundary crossing (Fernandez et al. 2011), rituals, routines and conventions related to food (Marshall 2005), the fundamental concept of ritual dimensions (Rook 1985) and consumption rituals (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). Lastly the sacred (Belk et al. 1989) and the experiences of nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013) are expounded.

2.1 Marketplace Mythologies

Generally speaking, cultural myths are regarded as key elements of a culture, which simultaneously imbue commodities and practices consumed by a society with symbolic meanings (Fernandez et al. 2011). According to Solomon et al. (2010), myths are stories used to express the core values and beliefs of a society or group. They are often presented as binary oppositions such as purity versus impurity, good versus evil, and nature versus technology (Solomon et al. 2010). According to Solomon et al. (2010), myths can be divided into three functions. The first function is metaphysical, explaining the origins of existence. The second function is sociological, referring to maintenance of social order by using social code. The last function of myths is psychological, providing models for personal behavior and conduct. In his article, Peltonen (2000) presents myths as a useful and essential part of transmitting extensive information in a form that can be understood and passed on easily. Although myths are rarely based on fact, they continue to exist for the purpose of telling stories about our origins and explaining our existence (Peltonen 2000). Peltonen (2000) believes that this kind of profound information regarding creational stories would hardly exist without a form of myth.

According to Thompson (2004), myths reflect historical ideals, yet are constantly reproduced in order to apply them to contemporary life. Marketplaces, in turn, provide a context for mythologies that interpret, employ and rework cultural meanings (Thompson 2004). Thompson (2004) suggests

that drawing from the conception of general myths, marketplace mythologies provide meanings for competitive efforts within marketplace structure. In order to transfer myths to marketplace, narrative work is required (Thompson 2004). Even though marketplace mythologies stem from cultural myths they often exhibit competing and juxtaposing ideological interests. In addition, symbolic boundaries of marketplaces are often implied as a counterforce to contemporary, mainstream social and political discourses (Arnould & Thompson 2005; Canniford & Shankar 2013). Mythic archetypes and plotlines of mythical narratives are utilized in advertising and mass media by ‘mythmakers’ in order to create promotional attraction and competitive advantage (Thompson 2004). According to Thompson (2004), consumers are also regarded as mythmakers, since consumers retell, reproduce and interpret marketplace mythologies.

This chapter introduces marketplace mythology as a merger of cultural meanings, metaphors, ideals, discourses and narratives that are interpreted, conveyed and reproduced in marketplaces. Marketplace mythology is reviewed through genealogy and consumer myths, and demonstrates how cultural meanings and counter memories are embedded in commercial myths. In addition, marketplace mythologies are reviewed as discourses of power and the resistance to these discourses are observed.

2.1.1 Genealogy of Marketplace Mythology

The Romantic and Gnostic mythoi circulate in marketplaces primarily representing the genealogy of marketplace mythology (Thompson 2004). Thompson’s (2004) view of the Gnostic mythos refers to heretical ideology adopted by the cultural elite of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, portraying the modern advocacy of technology and science. Accordingly, Gnosticism parades scientific progress over naturalism proposing that contemporary mankind could produce the same paradisiacal virtues that nature creates, only faster (Thompson 2004). Thompson (2004), suggests that in Gnostic mythos, technology and science are defined as divine vehicles legitimating exploitation and command over nature. Giving an example of Gnosticism employed in mass media discourse, Thompson (2004), presents how genetically manipulated food will prevail over the natural capacity to produce food, thus defeating world hunger.

Thompson (2004), notes that the Romantic mythos serves the ideology of regaining humanity's relationship with nature and expresses authentic self-expression, cultivation of creativity and aversion to industrialization, technology and science. The Romantic Mythos provides an alternative way of constructing a worldview through holism and organicism, and by discarding technology and artificiality. According to the Romanticism, veneration of nature also includes praising both the human body and profound emotions (Thompson 2004). From the perspective of Romanticism, nature is regarded as possessing fertile, organic and mystical powers that contribute to individuals' spiritual nourishment and recovery, and thus a specific form of self-fulfillment can be obtained through a return to nature (Thompson 2004). According to Thompson (2004), another aspect of the nature-venerating viewpoint of Romanticism is the revenge-of-nature metaphor, which refers to the threat of nature eventually retaliating on humanity for interfering with its sacredness by, e.g. exposing it to artificial chemicals. The revenge-of-nature causes anxiety, which may be maintained or even provoked by the marketers and mythmakers in order to generate an opportune context for market offerings that relieve those anxieties and threats (Thompson 2004). The experiences of nature and aspects related to it are further discussed in the chapter of Experience of Nature.

According to Thompson (2004), marketplaces may be encompassed by both Romantic and Gnostic metaphors that do not necessarily conflict, even though the juxtapositions of these two indicate countervailing ideas, primarily of nature and technology. Observing mergers between Romantic and Gnostic mythoi in a marketplace, Thompson (2004) refers to the natural health marketplace, in which mythic and romantic promises of nature's purifying power are expressed, while being tested, standardized and enhanced by technology and science. In mass media and advertisements related to natural health marketplace the prevailing Romantic mythos extols remedies as naturalistic divine tools but at the same time markets those offerings through Gnostic metaphors embodied in easy-to-take forms characterized by time-effectiveness (Thompson 2004). According to Thompson (2004) the Gnostic mythos here depicts science as the harvester of nature's powers promising boundless vitality. Another illustration of the merger of Romantic and Gnostic mythoi in a marketplace is the modern mountain man rendezvous through which the mountain man myth is exhibited (Belk & Costa 1998). According to Belk & Costa (1998) in the romantic fantasy of this consumption enclave, modern mountain men enact the role of rough men

who hunted beavers in the Rocky Mountains in the old American West. Belk & Costa (1998) suggest that in order to convincingly play the role of a mountain man, appropriate and authentic equipment is needed. Yet, paradoxically most of the equipment is only ostensibly authentic as they are commercial products, emulating the authentic ones.

2.1.2 Consumer Myths

Interpreting consumer myths has primarily been observed through a structuralist tradition emphasizing how archetypes and plotlines structure consumption experiences (Thompson 2004). According to Thompson (2004) the structuralist tradition perspective regards mythic archetypes as universally exhibited through different variations in folk stories and literature all around the world. Consequently, the primary dogma of structuralist tradition is that mythic archetypes exist to cover the most profound and fundamental issues of humanity including birth, death, illness, kinship, emotional and social conflicts and relationship with nature (Thompson 2004). Thompson (2004) suggests that these fundamental elements of humanity produce mythic archetypes, which universally reflect humanity's collective unconscious. These archetypes stemming from a historical pantheon of cultural meanings are reproduced within consumer myths in order to fit appropriately with contemporary life and serve contemporary purposes (Peñaloza 2000; Thompson 2004). Another perspective observed by Thompson (2004) is the critical-historical perspective, which suggests that meanings and ideals are embedded in mythic archetypes and story lines generating national mythologies. In summary Thompson (2004) notes that universal archetypes are needed in generating consumer myths as archetypes provide a credible basis for myths conveying profound concerns and aspirations of particular consumer cultures. A myth is viable and vital if it fits the conditions of environment and history and appropriately employs cultural traditions and meanings (Thompson 2004).

As an example of consumer myth Peñaloza (2000) introduces a romanticized myth of a lonesome and free-spirited cowboy, who wanders among wild cattle. The myth displays cowboys from an individualized and self-sufficient perspective, despite the reality, in which cattle ranches are overrun by industrialized rancher-capitalists in contemporary America. According to Peñaloza (2000), movement of cattle nowadays is restricted within limited space, and the industry is

bounded by technology and mass production, yet the cowboy culture remains alive within a myth. The purpose of the myth is to turn an otherwise toneless and estranged cattle industry into a romantic concept of individualism and self-sufficiency. Hence the myth paradoxically advocates old times and deprecates the modern world (Peñaloza 2000). Another example of consumer myths is portrayed in Thompson's (2004) article reviewing the natural health marketplace, in which consumer myths are utilized as spellbinding rhetorical vehicles for promoting commercial interests. According to Thompson's article (2004), the natural health's marketplace mythology illuminates the human desire for a return to nature. In this consumer myth of natural health, nature is depicted as paradise and mythologized through the rhetorical components of the Garden of Eden (Thompson 2004). The natural health marketplace mythology also redresses the conflict between nature and technology, reflecting the fundamental concerns of illness and the human relationship with nature (Thompson 2004). These conflicts are further discussed in the section on Conflicts and Betrayals in Assemblages of Nature.

In their article Belk & Costa (1998) discuss a consumer myth of mountain men, characterized as a rendezvous in which sacred times and places are celebrated. By contemporary rendezvous Belk & Costa (1998) refer to fantasy consumption spaces that convey narratives of the mythical past through e.g. objects and actions. Participants of the rendezvous, the modern mountain men, seek an escape from the profane and materialistic world through a consumption community of invented traditions and rituals (Belk & Costa 1998). According to Belk & Costa (1998) the mythic past of the beaver hunting mountain men of the old American West is recreated through appropriate equipment, symbolic possessions, living conditions and the personalities of those men. As a salient part of mythmaking, fabricated authenticity communicates the values of individualism, naturalism and primitivism within the paradisiacal consumption enclave (Belk & Costa 1998). Belk & Costa (1998) depict the mountain man myth as a secular religion with nature worship and historic hero admiration: by transforming into modern mountain men participants retrieve this mythical heritage. As mentioned previously, consumer myths often include heroic archetypes. Heroic qualities of the original mountain men, such as roughness and survival skill, are regenerated and modified by participants and mass media (Belk & Costa 1998).

2.1.3 Cultural meanings and Countermemory in Commercial Myths

According to Peñaloza (2000) cultural meanings including e.g. freedom, naturalism, competition and family-oriented values, are mediated through commercial offerings and exploited by marketers in the form of narratives. Correspondingly, Thompson & Tian (2008) propose interrelatedness between countertermemories, cultural myths and competing commercial forces and suggest that cultural memory is mythologized in order to reflect consumers' desires for more authentic, purer and simpler ways of living. However, scholars of market culture have eagerly segregated myths from history, which would otherwise be exposed to the corruption of mythical narratives (Peñaloza 2000). According to Peñaloza (2000) the separation results in a situation where a complete understanding of marketplaces as mediators of both myths and history is difficult to obtain. Despite some scholars separating history and mythology, drawing from Lipsitz's perspective Thompson (2004) proposes that contemporary narratives, defined as countertermemories, emerge from historical experiences and myths. Consequently, these cultural countertermemories are linked with marketplace mythologies especially as illness and death are fundamental historic motifs for belief in mysticism (Thompson 2004).

Cultural myths embody countertermemories and collective memories that reflect social groups' pursuits and struggles to preserve or change socioeconomic order and status (Peñaloza 2000; Thompson & Tian 2008). According to Thompson & Tian (2008) and Peñaloza (2000), historical traces emerge in countertermemories, which are reproduced, deliberately excluded and juxtaposed in the process of commercial mythmaking. Commercial mythmaking practices are entangled with historical and competitive factors, traditions and countermemory (Thompson & Tian 2008). Consequently Thompson & Tian (2008) suggest that commercial mythmaking is an ideological process, which encapsulates indoctrination, sociocultural meanings, the past as well as entertainment in a commercial form. Thompson & Tian (2008) propose that through distributing and reproducing existing cultural myths commercial myths provide social contributions as well as identity value. Although different commercial mythmakers may not compete in the same business area, they are still competing in the context of the mass-mediated myth market for identity value (Thompson & Tian 2008). Commercial myths may also evoke new mythical perceptions by mixing narratives with cultural myths and countertermemories (Peñaloza 2000; Thompson & Tian

2008). These new mythical ideals and configurations of counter memories resulting from commercial mythmaking, invariably stem from genealogical and cultural roots, and can be traced back into history. New configurations of counter memories, in turn, contribute to changing conditions in culture and the marketplace.

Marketplaces and market stimuli are considered to be living traditions, functioning as mediators of meanings, values and counter memory, and establishing a culturally productive setting for actions performed by marketers and consumers (Peñaloza 2000; Thompson & Tian 2008). Hence Peñaloza (2000) proposes that in the process of producing and reproducing counter memory, values and meanings, consumers are not merely passive respondents, but instead, contribute to the culturally productive process actively and in conjunction with marketers. Peñaloza (2000) presents trade shows as an example of marketplace, in which cultural meanings are jointly produced. In her study of livestock shows, Peñaloza (2000) presents how marketers utilize historical traditions and mythified business activities to evoke authenticity. Paradoxically, it was noticed that ranchers resented the commercialization of the cattle industry, viewing commerce as an inauthenticating factor although Peñaloza (2000) analyzed commerce as a production site for cultural meanings and values. Historical links to commercial offerings are used to legitimize marketers' efforts, since history provides an immense pool of cultural meanings (Peñaloza 2000). According to Peñaloza (2000) livestock shows are convenient examples of marketers' business activities coming together with cultural meanings in order to create reminiscent of mythical stories.

As another example of a culturally productive marketplace, Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) suggest the consumption rituals of Thanksgiving reflect the underlying cultural meanings and values of contemporary society in America. The celebration of Thanksgiving was discovered to reflect, *inter alia*, the values of abundance and hard work. These and other values were conveyed to the household and to consumer culture through rituals. The notion of hard work was concretized in the time and effort invested in cooking by female family members (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). Although commercialized food products were exploited to some extent, the importance of self-made food was obvious amongst the target group (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). Moreover, after the ritualistic preparation of food the observed women did not stand still but instead continued to 'work' making sure no one was left with an empty stomach. Wallendorf & Arnould (1991)

indicate that the motif for hard work relies upon a belief in hard work paying off.

2.1.4 Discourses of Power and Power Resistance

Thompson (2004) presents marketplace mythologies as platforms for interplay between consumers' narratives of identity and diverse marketplace articulations conveying cultural meanings, metaphors, ideals and narratives. Mass media and advertising both mythologize commercial offerings, which contribute to the construction process of a consumer's ideal lifestyle and thus articulate discourses of power. Thompson (2004) defines a discourse of power as an ideological vehicle whose primary purpose is to influence consumers' lifestyles and identities. Discourses of power may exist in different levels of consumer culture affecting cultural ideals or defining a consumer's identity within an institution (Thompson 2004). By engaging marketplace mythologies consumers extract elements of these mythologies into their self-conception and establish a connection with different discourses of power circulating through their lives (Thompson 2004). In addition, Thompson (2004) notes that marketplace mythology may become a self-mythology premised on the different discourses of power.

Marketplaces are interactive social networks, in which different and sometimes countervailing ideologies exist, yet the successful and prevailing ideals may create internal resistance and criticism (Thompson 2004). Thompson (2004) proposes that ideological constraints emerging though marketplace mythologies are not passively adopted by consumers, as consumers tend to protest certain ideals especially when they do not fit the central mythic premises. These counter-arguments reflecting conflicts, represent instability in a marketplace mythology, which is challenged by consumers, and possibly transformed through emerging meanings and metaphors (Thompson 2004). Thompson (2004) remarks that the context of overlapping discourse of power and resistance emerging from it, generates new power relationships, new configurations of ideals. According to Thompson (2004) discourses of resistance draw from the cultural content of countervailing mythic dimensions, such as good versus evil and the struggle between the strong and the weak. Based on these cultural models, discourses of power-resistance are prevented from becoming ideological paradoxes (Thompson 2004).

As an example of power-resistance dynamics, Thompson (2004) introduces the concept of how natural health consumers, who apply marketplace mythology, resist salient contemporary notions of workaholism, stress and medical authority. Through this example, Thompson (2004) also suggests that power relations of different discourses restructure consumers' social life. Even though Gnostic and Romantic mythoi are merged into natural health marketplace mythology, consumers' mythologizing articulations indicate a strong paradox, in which resisting one discourse of power results in inducing another (Thompson 2004). According to Thompson (2004) this paradoxical outcome of controversial articulations sustains and reworks marketplace mythology. Accordingly, organic food consumers contribute to marketplace mythology and commercial diversity by resisting capitalism, which eventually leads to the creation of new markets (Thompson 2004). As a conclusion, Thompson (2004) states that ideological paradoxes ignore conflicting and overlapping power-relationships, which can be transformed and proclaimed acceptable through the marketplace mythology.

2.2 Rituals

The early studies of rituals were conducted from the standpoint of cultural anthropology, history of religions, sociology and psychology (Rook 1985). In his article, Rook (1985) relates that in the late 20th century, among the researchers specializing in rituals, there was a great disagreement in which context the concept of ritual should be used. At the same time in the late 20th century, business-related studies focusing on ritualistic behavior started to emerge in the field of organizational behavior and marketing research (Rook 1985). As the ritualistic experiences and ritual activities of individuals are complex, numerous and intricate, Rook (1985) suggests that the notion of rituals should not be compressed into a briefly explained and unequivocal definition, but instead, it is reasonable to consider rituals as an ambiguous concept, which can include many different meanings.

Many of the mundane consumption activities involve ritualistic aspects based on their fixed behavioristic pattern (Solomon et al. 2010). For example, personal grooming, bedtime and athletic activities most often include ritualized features as they consist of sequences of behaviors helping in the transition between the private and public self (Rook 1985). According to Rook's (1985)

article, even the concept of consumption in some relationships is interpreted as a ritual of modern life. Rituals are often related to social-cultural occasions, such as holidays and rites of passage, which are special transitions marked by a change in social status (Solomon et al. 2010). Particularly those traditional life events that signify one's rite of passage, such as graduation and marriage, are displayed through ritualized activities (Rook 1985). This chapter introduces rituals as markers of mythology, illustrating individual and social myths, beliefs and aspirations. The definition and research background of rituals are presented, followed by rituals elements, categories and ritual vitality.

2.2.1 Definition of Ritual

In his article Rook (1985), argues that at the end of the 20th century, most of the definitions introduced restricted the meaning of ritual in its entirety, concentrating on only some parts of the whole concept. Rook (1985) notes that many of the definitions of his time, depicted rituals from the primitive and retrograde standpoint, or focused only on the comprehensive side of rituals that occurred only within a social framework. The most appealing definition in Rook's (1985) opinion was the definition of a ritual, consisting of a continuum of predetermined behaviors, which form a symbolic and indicative activity. Moreover, a ritual activity that appears in everyday, or extraordinary settings, is engaged in repeatedly over time (Rook 1985; Marshall 2005). If rituals can also be regarded as everyday activities, what is the characteristic that separates a ritual from a conventional pattern of behavior? According to Rook (1985), even though rituals might occur in everyday settings, they are constructed from episodic sequences with symbolic meanings arousing expedient feelings. Another distinguishing feature of rituals is that the sections of the continuum are predetermined, even though the sections and their contents may be shaped over a long period of time (Rook 1985). In his article Rook (1985), presents rituals as generally well-established and embedded sociocultural behaviors, which are not easily modified without resistance; however, rituals tend to change their shape over time.

According to Sassatelli (2007) and (2005), rituals can be defined as a means to affirm, produce and transfer conventional symbolic meanings Marshall and shared understanding within a social context. Rituals shape and affirm collectivity through behavioral norms, implying that

consumption rituals are necessitated by social-cultural demands rather than by utility (Fernandez et al. 2011). In order to keep rituals alive, they require commitment and maintenance from an individual or group (Sassatelli 2007). According to Sassatelli (2007), when a social actor or group invests in a ritual regularly, the ritual stays alive and binds those related to it. Moreover, by practicing rituals, a social actor or a group creates communal utopias that may even be impossible to obtain in real life (Sassatelli 2007). Thus, rituals not only unite people in a community, but also prove the importance of subjects and define norms and ideals, which otherwise might be abandoned. By expressing the ideals of the world, rituals legitimize the existence of a particular group (Sassatelli 2007).

According to Arnould and Price (2000), rituals are defined as a demonstration of ‘authoritative performance’, which enhance the sense of collectiveness and construct the individual’s sense of belonging. From this perspective, rituals as ‘authoritative performances’ function as vehicles integrating an individual into a community. For example, the meal rituals of Christmas and Thanksgiving are restricted by authoritative performance in such a way that no other interpretation of appropriate behavior is tolerated (Marshall 2005). The existence of authoritative performances is based on the repeated and active participation of community members creating social and cultural unity. On the other hand, engaging in authoritative performances, community members are prevented from experiencing individualized and authentic activities. From an individual perspective, rituals are defined as enactments of individual myths that illustrate an individual’s aspirations and beliefs, as well as internal conflicts (Rook 1985).

It is important to distinguish rituals from conventions, routines and habits, which are similar to rituals, and sometimes may overlap. Rook (1985) sees a habit as meaningless behavior, which does not occur in a fixed pattern. Conventions and habits, such as eating yoghurt for breakfast, are singular routines with no symbolic element to them, whereas rituals tend to be more complex experiences formed by fixed behaviors and ritualistic activities (Marshall 2005; Rook 1985). According to Marshall (2005), conventions and habits are not accompanied by conscious reflection, in contrast to rituals. In his article, Marshall (2005) refers to Ilmonen (2001) by defining habits and conventions as behavioral acts in everyday life with no sacredness attached nor a risk of deviating from rules followed by sanctions. Routines act as vehicles to simplify decision-making

and to facilitate, optimize and make everyday life more predictable (Marshall 2005). Marshall (2005), sees routines encompassing a sense of the normal, with no guidance on strict behavioral norms, whereas for rituals the manner of consuming is as essential as the object consumed.

The pattern of a ritual follows a guideline similar to narratives having a beginning, middle and end (Rook 1985). Meanings, which are difficult to explain verbally, are communicated through rituals by means of narrative elements. Rook (1985) remarks that the tone of a ritual alone does not define whether a behavioral occurrence is a habit or a ritual; rituals can be prosaic and commonplace or they can be dramatic experiences embellished with material and symbolic objects. Rook (1985) ends the discussion on distinctive attributes of habits and rituals on a statement that rituals provoke immediate behavioral response facilitating interaction within a group.

2.2.2 Ritual elements

Rook (1985) identifies four rituals elements that are tangible: ritual artifacts, a ritual script, ritual performance role or roles and a ritual audience. Ritual artifacts are most often consumer products to which a symbolic meaning is attached. Ritual artifacts serve as a relevant component in a ritualistic experience having a predetermined role in enhancing the feeling and meaning of a ritual. These artifacts are most visibly incorporated in the ritual of gift giving, and in other exchange rituals, where the artifact assigns and affirms communication between the giver and the receiver. Rook (1985) states that ritual artifacts are often considered as ritual symbols, such as logos, icons or other markers of mythology.

A ritual script is a cognitive manuscript of a fixed storyline aggregating behavioral acts, procedures and consumption of ritual artifacts into an integrated entity. Nevertheless Rook (1985) notes that a ritual script does not necessarily include a vast consumption of ritual artifacts, as the role of the artifacts can also be marginal. According to Rook (1985), the character of a ritual script may vary from informal family-occasions, such as a Sunday dinner, to highly formal ceremonies such as funerals. Informal scripts in general allow some variations, as the storyline and required behavioral acts are as strictly prescribed as in formal scripts. The more formal a script, the less alterations it tolerates. For example, in rites of passage such as graduation, the script is prescribed,

but may have detailed alterations depending for example on family traditions. The most formal ritual scripts are displayed in highly institutional and ceremonial rites, for example in religious rituals, where no amendments are approved of, and the script may appear in a written document to confirm its formality and constancy (Rook 1985).

Rook (1985), introduces a ritual performance role, or roles, as one of the four elements of the overall ritual. The participants, who ultimately implement the ritual script, enact the ritual performance role(s). Ritual performance roles are sometimes scripted and guide the participant's code of conduct: for example, a bride usually walks down the aisle silently and places herself next to the groom who is waiting at the altar. Hence the performance of the two performing in the leading role, the bride and groom, is prescribed in a ritual script. Any deviations from the scripted performance role may lead to embarrassment and apprehension (Rook 1985), which is why ritual roles are either performed by the same participants or introduced thoroughly to a novice (Marshall 2005). According to Rook (1985), the fourth element is a ritual audience, which does not have a performance role, but at whom the ritual is targeted. For example, the target audience in a wedding is the group of invited guests, apart from the close relatives who might act in a performance role.

2.2.3 Typology of Rituals

Referring to Levy's (1978) standpoint on categorization of rituals, Rook (1985) approaches the typology of rituals from a wide behavioral perspective, covering all types of rituals. Differences in ritualistic behavior form the basis for the classification. Rook (1985) introduces five types of ritual behavior: human biology, individual aims and emotions, cosmological beliefs, group learning and cultural values. Due to the topic of the thesis, rituals characterized by communality are emphasized in this chapter. Rituals based on human biology refer to vocal and physical social communication. The ritual behavior of human biology is fundamental and analyzed in comparison with animal rituals, in which similar ritualistic behavior can be detected. Rituals categorized through human biology are not discussed further since they are principally studied from the standpoint of behavioral and anthropological science. According to Rook (1985), rituals based on individual aims and emotions are personal, occurring principally in the context of everyday life. Rituals concerning individual aims and emotions create meanings for everyday activities such as

household rituals and personal grooming (Rook 1985). An individual ritual, which has become too intense and compulsive for its performer, can be considered a neurosis. As an example of a neurotic ritual, Rook (1985) refers to compulsive hand washing. The cosmological dimension of ritual behavior represents religious, aesthetic and magical types of rituals (Rook 1985). According to Rook (1985) people still unconsciously hang on to superstitious beliefs despite an evident implausibility. Superstitious and mystical procedures exist not only in intense mythical rituals but also in real-life settings, since individuals tend to be highly motivated by mystique and superstition; individuals perform ritualistic procedures in order to acquire good luck or banish evil spirits (Rook 1985).

Group learning rituals are typed into three dimensions based on of the number of participants in the group, namely civic, small group and family related rituals (Rook 1985). Group learning rituals from the civic standpoint are performed in order to evoke communal coherence functioning as a vehicle to prevent social conflicts. Cultural myths and symbolic objects are frequently incorporated in civic rituals in order to legitimize the existence of a ritual, and to bolster social order (Rook 1985). Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) note that although rituals communicate social norms to which recipients respond, people also perform an active role in constructing culture. The motivation for reforming culture steams from an underlying dissatisfaction and imbalance amongst culture members that undermines social order (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). According to Wallendorf & Arnould (1991), rituals facilitate the maintenance of social order on the strength of shared experiences and collectively accepted norms.

From the standpoint of social order, meal rituals and food consumption are scripted to follow a certain pattern of served dishes, and to demonstrate appropriate eating behavior (Marshall 2005). According to Marshall (2005) meal ritual scripts facilitate potential social conflicts related to surrounding food culture preventing participants from unwanted misbehavior. Rook (1985) states that although civic rituals facilitate communal communication by establishing the correct way of behaving, some have acknowledged degeneration in cultural rituals, predicting difficulties in a social system. Nevertheless, many of the civic rituals are well-established such as Christmas Eve, Independence Day and Midsummer in Finland. For instance, small group rituals include Animal Rights Day and business negotiation rituals. According to Marshall (2005), meals reflect cultural

meanings, and built-in eating behaviors regulated by the surrounding community. Marshall (2005) suggests that meals are not just fuel for the body but rather represent a more profound cultural meaning as ritualistic objects and events, although as an activity the meal is unexceptional and seemingly mundane. Eating occurs most often in private settings, but nevertheless is strongly guided by unconscious and unspoken civic norms. Marshall (2005) refers to Falk's (1994) argument on how a community determines what is acceptable or unacceptable food. Thus, communities regulate individuals' eating habits by constricting the category of 'appropriate' food: otherwise edible food may sometimes be culturally prohibited, for instance, serving insects in a Western kitchen. According to Marshall (2005), the cultural perspective regarding norms of eating and taste preferences is as essential a part of formed behaviors as biological and physical factors.

Rook (1985) suggests that family rituals are performed in order to create cohesion and encourage joint activities. Another purpose of family rituals lies in its instructive power to pass on narratives and appropriate behavior to the next generation. Rook (1985) points out that rituals performed by a family can be as mundane as a bedtime routine, or a birthday celebration, and are often related to extensive consumption and buying behaviors. Virtually all the household activities have the potential to be transformed into a ritual (Rook 1985). According to Rook (1985), some specialists even claim that absence or presence of rituals in a household denote the health of a family. The above-mentioned perspective is not far-fetched, as family rituals are characterized by unity and interpersonal activities. Along with consumption feasts, some leisure activities, such as the fantasy experiences offered by modern rendezvous, may also be characterized as ritualistic (Belk & Costa 1998). Belk & Costa (1998) suggest these leisure activities are performed through ritualistic behavior, and occur in ritual spaces reinforced by romanticized beliefs.

As an example of a merged civic and family merged ritual, Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) suggest that the most important consumption ritual related to Thanksgiving is eating. Thanksgiving eating rituals occur in private households, accompanied by either a nuclear family unit or an extended family unit (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). Although Thanksgiving is celebrated nationwide, and the rituals are characterized by cultural meanings, Thanksgiving rituals can additionally be regarded as family rituals, due to the fact that they take place in private settings and are portrayed

through family narratives (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). Thanksgiving is one of the annual feasts in which potential new family members are familiarized with the family's rituals (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). As previously mentioned, rituals are scripted and performed through ritual roles (Rook 1985), and consequently it can be embarrassing and stressful for the newcomer to partake in a ritual without proper orientation. Thus, potential family members are introduced to cohesive rituals and family myths by, for example being shown the family photo albums and by being told the mythical stories that represent the family's values and beliefs.

The rituals related to cultural values and meanings are principally social and collective occurrences marked by symbolism. Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) suggest that ritual artifacts encompass cultural meanings, emotion, beliefs and values. Symbolized by consumer culture elements, artifacts communicate underlying meanings, and are thus a salient ingredient of any vital ritual. Nevertheless, the meanings attached to ritual artifacts are not necessarily recognized by the ritual participants (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). For example, rites of passage and boundary crossings represent rituals by which cultural values are imprinted. In a rite of passage, a participant gains a new social status through a highly symbolic ritual (Rook 1985; Sassatelli 2007), whereas a ritual displayed by a group in order to establish or affirm boundaries between them and external groups is called a boundary crossing (Fernandez et al. 2011). According to Belk & Costa (1998), modern mountain men enacting the role of the mythic mountain man engage in private rituals, such as dressing role-appropriate costumes, and receiving a mountain man name. Yet, these private rituals, acting as rites of passage, are exhibited in the shared rituals of the rendezvous. Participating in the rendezvous transformation rituals contributes to the identity work, whereas the shared rituals mythologize invented traditions, creating a sense of communal belonging, and enabling the partaking in the mythology (Belk & Costa 1998).

In their article, Fernandez et al. (2011) introduce Hindu wedding as one of the most important boundary crossings in the Hindu culture. According to the article (Fernandez et al. 2011), Hindu women go through a rite of passage by performing boundary rituals. An unmarried Hindu woman is escorted by her biological family to enter her new, conjugal, extended family by means of a series of careful rituals, which ensure her purity as fiancée. Fernandez et al. (2011) describe the transformation into an eligible bride and daughter-in-law as a complex set of boundary rituals,

requiring symbolic materials in addition to ritualistic practices. The same article introduces the Hindu wedding as an opportune event for the groom's family to reaffirm their family boundaries and present the bride, the newcomer to the family, as an aesthetic subject. The bride undergoes a visual, as well as spiritual, metamorphosis contributed to by gold items, which are given and received in a collective process. Fernandez et al. (2011), note that both the giving and receiving of a gold item, which symbolically encapsulates a purifying power, contributes to the visual presentation of the bride as a daughter. Thus, the auspicious symbolism of gold makes tangible the new status of a Hindu woman as a pure Hindu wife.

According to Sassatelli (2007), consumption rituals can be divided into four categories: exchange, possession, maintenance and divestment. Exchange rituals are activities connecting objects and people, which enhance interpersonal communication through ceremonial or trust behavior. Gift giving is one of the most obvious exchange rituals. Ritual behavior, especially gift giving, often involves commercial aspects, since in many rituals, services or goods are consumed or passed on in a symbolic and ceremonial manner (Rook 1985). There has been some evidence that demonstrates how the price category of a gift might correspond to the type of ritual occasion and gift receiver (Rook 1985). According to Belk et al. (1989) when buying gifts consumers engage in the early stages of the sacralization process by separating the object from the profane world, for example by removing price tags and wrapping the gift. Purchasing a gift is followed by a ritual ceremony involving exchanging the gift, which expresses the connection between gift giver and receiver (Belk et al. 1989).

Rituals of possessions allocate a symbolic meaning to an object, which encompasses an allegoric meaning for the possessor or possessors. In rituals of possessions, objects, originally mundane or extraordinary, are personalized, and given a valued meaning through ritualistic experiences. Sassatelli (2007) suggests that rituals of maintenance assist in preserving and reviving the symbolic meaning of an object over time for an individual or a group. Thompson (2005) touches on rituals of maintenance in his ethnography of the natural health marketplace, suggesting that the revenge-of-nature increases susceptibility to sickness, requiring countermeasures. The mythic idea of nature taking revenge on humanity through chronic illnesses leads to a need for ritual practices to overpower threats from the revenge-of-nature (Thompson 2004). Thompson (2004) suggests

that by routinely engaging in body cleansing practices these purifying rituals assist in maintaining the body's inherent defense system, and obtaining a purer and healthier state of existence. Lastly, rituals of divestment refer to the abandonment of an object, as well as its attributed meanings (Sassatelli 2007).

In his article, Marshall (2005) introduces the idea of how to consume instead of what is consumed as a central aspect of consumption rituals. Referring to Holt (1995,1998), Marshall (2005) notes that consumption objects are utilized in order to define a consumer's existence in relation to others, and the process of consuming those objects in a ritualistic manner exposes the underlying fragments of cultural capital. According to Wallendorf & Arnould (1991), the consumption rituals in their example related to Thanksgiving celebrated in America, can be regarded as a discourse of the underlying values and meanings of contemporary consumer culture. Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) note that holidays in particular are auspicious settings for consumption rituals, which are active constructors of culture. One of the underlying values of Thanksgiving is abundance, which is celebrated by the prolific consumption of food (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991).

2.2.4 Ritual Vitality

As already mentioned, rituals are prone to losing their significance over time. In order to evaluate the vitality of a ritual, Rook (1985) introduces ritual vitality assessment criteria, based on his presentation of structural ritual elements: ritual artifacts, ritual script, ritual roles and audience. The assessment classes each dimension according to how well, how unclearly or how poorly those four-dimensional elements are represented in the ritual. Firstly, in the evaluation, the extensiveness and nature of incorporated artifacts are assessed. Secondly, the presence of a ritual script is evaluated, followed by an assessment of how clearly the participants' performance roles are determined. Lastly, audience attendance is reviewed, together with how clearly the target group is defined. Rook (1985) notes that the more incoherent and variable the understanding of ritual's elements, the less vitality the ritual encompasses.

To give an example of how ritual vitality is assessed, Rook (1985) gives the example of a truly vital ritual, Christmas, in which artifacts, scripts, roles and the audience are well represented.

Another example Rook (1985) presents is Halloween, which is less clearly defined as a vital ritual. Although many people regard Halloween artifacts as an essential part of the celebration, the presence of a well-defined audience and set script is vague (Rook 1985). In their paper, Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) explore ritual vitality through an example of forgetfulness related to Thanksgiving rituals. Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) suggest that when a ritual is functioning improperly, forgetfulness may create intolerance. However, forgetfulness accompanied by acceptance and forgiveness strengthens the values related to family rituals. Rituals that function properly are more likely to be vital, accepting of omissions and resistant to variation (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) note that rituals that function improperly are more likely to lose their legitimacy as any forgetfulness that occurs may create rejection.

Highly productized and commercially processed artifacts may be regarded as unwanted features in consumption rituals, undermining the essence of the rituals. Nevertheless, mass-produced products and services are increasingly utilized in rituals, serving as ritual artifacts (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991). In their article Wallendorf & Arnould (1991), tackle the question of how commercialized objects are justified as rituals artifacts. Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) introduce the sacralization of mass-produced products by using only products quintessentially related to the occasion, or by exploiting temporal separation, in which ritualistic products are separated from everyday ones. The third solution mentioned by Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) revolves around packaging: people may sacralize a product through decommmodification by, e.g. removing price tags and packaging. The notion of decommmodification here refers to the opposite of commodification, which means marketers and consumers strive to attach meanings to tangible and intangible commercial commodities (Peñaloza 2000). Lastly, Wallendorf & Arnould (1991) note that sacralization may be performed by using special or additional features, such as extraordinary ingredients in foods related to holiday rituals. By sacralizing and modifying mass-produced products, a ritual participant preserves ritual vitality, despite the increasingly commercialized consumer culture (Wallendorf & Arnould 1991).

Fernandez et al. (2011) note that while consumer culture in general is becoming even more globalized, many cultures try to differentiate and strengthen their cultural identity through consumption rituals. Nevertheless, the contradiction between globalization and the effort to

maintain the cultural background might result in stress and difficulties within a group or an individual (Fernandez et al. 2011). A decline in cultural rituals has also been recognized, since cultural rituals are prone to the passage of time like most marketplace products (Rook 1985). Rook (1985) admits that some rituals may have lost their meaning over time, and as a result these rituals have either vanished or remained meaningless, yet ritualistic.

According to Marshall (2005), meal rituals are likely to exist in the future although there have been doubts about the individualization of consumption undermining rituals related to food. For example, the trend to consuming lighter meals and snacks demolishes community-based meal rituals that principally occur in a private kitchen. However, eating take-away food deviate from the ordinary context and consumption of a meal, suggesting that ready meals do not necessarily overpower ritualistic meal activities. Special occasions, such as holidays, continue to encapsulate ritualistic features with scripts, prescribed performance roles, as well as ritual artifacts in the form of particular dishes (Rook 1985; Marshall 2005). For further investigations of changes in ritualistic and non-ritualistic meal activities, Marshall (2005) suggests a standpoint of the contextual and situational aspects of consumption.

2.3 The Sacred

According to Belk et al. (1989) in some premodern societies the sacred emerges through the cultivation of shamanism, animism and magic, whilst in contemporary Western world, the notion of the sacred is often related to religion. Although religion is a context in which the sacred exists, it is not the only context in which self-transcending feelings and overwhelming sensations occur (Belk et al. 1989). People have an inherent need to believe in transcendental and superhuman powers, resulting in the reproduction and preservation of the concept of the sacred (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) suggest that sacred status may be attached to various value expressive elements, such as objects, places and time, existing in different contexts that include the natural environment and the marketplace. According to Belk et al. (1989), diverse meanings and attributes are attached to sacred elements: the sacred may be understood to protect, bring prosperity, heal the diseased and preserve the deceased. The sacred is also often associated with ideals of purity and auspiciousness (Fernandez et al. 2011) and venerated, feared and treated with the utmost respect

by related members (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) remark that by engaging with the sacred, consumers experience self-transcending sensations and other powerful feelings, such as joy, stability and even ecstasy. According to Belk et al. (1989), consumers are not merely passive recipients of sacred –profane divergence, but instead contribute to the process by secularizing some objects and sacralizing others through myths, rituals and signs. The values of these elements are expressed through consumption, in which the sacred is interpreted, preserved and reproduced (Belk et al. 1989).

2.3.1 Two-way process of sacralizing and secularizing

Belk et al. (1989) note that consumer behavior interprets and reproduces two salient processes occurring in contemporary societies; these are secularization of institutional religion and sacralization of the secular. Both processes express the distinction between the sacred and the profane (Belk et al. 1989). According to Belk et al. (1989), religion nowadays is gradually being secularized, partly in order to reach people in their everyday life settings, resulting in religion undermining its own sacredness. Religion is losing its meaning in people's lives, and does not dictate consumers' behavior anymore, since consumption has gained a role in experiencing the sacred. An object with no religious links may be treated with the utmost respect, whereas religious elements may not arouse deep feelings (Belk et al. 1989). Hence, Belk et al. (1989) suggest that the two-way process of secularization-sacralization is reproduced by consumers who sacralize and desacralize components.

Belk et al. (1989) suggest that as religion decreasingly serves as a framework for value-expressive experiences, consumers seek feelings of ecstasy and transcendence elsewhere. As a result, the sacralization of the secular occurs within consumer culture contexts, such as in politics, science, general consumption and art (Belk et al. 1989). In addition to satisfying mundane and hegemonic needs, Belk et al. (1989) note that deeper meanings and transcendent experiences are attached to consumption that illustrate aspects of the sacred. In the past consumption was seen to be an antithesis of religious ideals, nonetheless, the revolution of individualism has contributed to the sacralization of consumption elements in the contemporary consumption-oriented society (Belk et al. 1989). Consequently, sacred consumption is experienced through secular rituals such as

shopping in malls regarded nowadays as cathedrals (Belk et al. 1989). In a cultural context, sacred consumption enables deep knowledge of society to be passed on, declaring sacred consumption societally acceptable (Belk et al. 1989). In addition, sacred elements create fellowship and cohesion within a society (Belk et al. 1989). Hence Belk et al. (1989) point out how consumer culture reproduces itself by exploiting experiences and consumption of the sacred.

2.3.2 Sacred Consumer Domains

According to Belk et al. (1989), consumer domains are defined as secular consumption elements in which possible sacralization occurs and the sacred is experienced. These consumer domains are principally classified into six categories: places, times, persons, experiences, tangible objects and intangible objects. Due to the subject of the thesis, this chapter concentrates on the first four domains. Belk et al. (1989) suggest that places are sacralized through ritualistic activities such as ceremonies and burials. The code of conduct in these sacred places is strict and predetermined, requiring reverential behavior, such as purification before entering the sacred place (Belk et al. 1989). In addition, Belk et al. (1989) suggest that the time spent in a sacred place is transformed into sacred time. Belk et al. (1989) note that the primary space for the sacred to occur in a secular context is home, which is detached from the profane outside world and where the most sacred family rituals are cultivated. Homes are sanctums that provide privacy in which to secretly exhibit the sacred (Belk et al. 1989).

In the secular world, time can also be divided into sacred and profane periods (Belk et al. 1989). Sacred time is sometimes associated with specific objects used to bolster the sacredness, and may be separated from profane periods through purification rituals such as those occurring when entering sacred places (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) propose that sacred time, often located in the past, is understood as being an infinite and indefinite period, which is preserved through rituals and interpreted through mythos. For example, creation myths cannot be defined through a specific time span, but instead are located in the mythic past (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) present that one of the focal attributes of sacred times in general is that they exist in daily, weekly, monthly or yearly cycles.

The sacred existing in the consumer domain of persons refers to persons with extraordinary and magical power (Belk et al. 1989). However, in the contemporary world the sacredness of persons is better exhibited through the cultivation of the sacred in the self and the body (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) regard the body as a sanctuary for the soul, hence being ritually bathed, medicated, groomed and purified. This leads to bathrooms becoming shrines for these ritual activities. An important observation from Fernandez et al. (2011) is that the notion of sacred persons occurs in rites of passage, for example the boundary crossing rituals related to a Hindu wedding being executed by female relatives, who purify the wedding couple. This remark emphasizes Hindu women being considered as the protectors and reproducers of the sacred (Fernandez et al. 2011). Belk et al. (1989) suggest that sacred experiences are strongly linked with sacred times and places, which predominantly provide frameworks for sacred experiences, and assist in determining the distinction between sacred and profane experiences. As an example, Belk et al. (1989) present how eating is regarded as a sacred experience when the purpose of nourishing is complemented with deeper meanings and eating is enacted with ritualistic manners in certain places and times. Belk et al. (1989) also suggest that certain foods may be transformed into sacred icons that nostalgically reflect the surrounding culture.

2.3.3 Characterizing the Sacred

The sacred is characterized by various qualities. By merging ideas of other theorists Belk et al. (1989) identified and presented 12 attributes of the sacred, applicable to individual, social and psychological treatments of the sacred. In this section, the qualities of the sacred that fit the thesis subject are introduced. Below, presented attributes that are primarily linked with purely social contexts are myths and *communitas*, whereas *kratophany*, opposition to the profane, objectification, rituals and mystery can be applied to both social and individual contexts (Belk et al. 1989). Myths, previously introduced in a section of its own, create a historical basis for the sacred and preserve the sacred status through repeatedly expressed narratives, such as creation stories of the sacred (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) remark that myths may also include speculations about existence and deeper meanings of life that unify the participant's collective comprehension of the sacred. Hence, the sacred is introduced to new participants through myths (Belk et al. 1989). Another social treatment of the sacred presented by Belk et al. (1989) is

communitas, which is a social antistructure liberating participants from social hierarchy through transcending experiences of status equality. Belk et al. (1989) suggest that communitas, such as the consumption enclaves of the mountain man myth (Belk & Costa 1998), often transpire when an individual is in the transitional stage of a process between two statuses, such as in initiation ceremonies. Communitas are primarily expressed through communal ritual experiences (Belk et al. 1989).

Kratophany, as well as all the other attributes presented in the following paragraph, can be applied to both individual and social treatment of the sacred (Belk et al. 1989). Possessing a tremendous dualistic power, kratophany refers to approach and avoidance dimensions of the sacred (Belk et al. 1989). According to Belk et al. (1989), the sacred is not only a manifestation of good and beneficence existing in holy elements but instead may be enfolded by evil powers that occur, *inter alia*, in impurity and illness. The sacred characterized by beneficence is desired and venerated whereas the evil sacred is feared (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) suggest that, despite expressing the opposing extremes, both beneficent and evil powers possess sacred powers that evoke equivocal responses also known as kratophany. As observed earlier in the thesis, rituals are a vital attribute of the sacred. Individually, or most often socially performed rituals, determine the code of conduct that respects sacred elements (Belk et al. 1989). Moreover, rituals prepare profane participants for contacting the sacred and prevent the evil powers of kratophany from being released (Belk et al. 1989). According to Belk et al. (1989), understanding and experiencing the sacred is not a result of rationale, but instead emerge from an aspiration for deeper meanings and emotional processes, described as mystery. Mystery preserves the sacredness of an element, since without mystery the sacredness disappears (Belk et al. 1989).

Belk et al. (1989) suggest that the most salient aspect of observing the sacred is the opposition to the profane; even though the key objective of the sacred differs, mistreatment of a sacred object results in revulsion, whereas the same treatment of a profane object does not evoke deep feelings (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al (1989) suggest that in contrast to profane elements, sacred elements cannot be treated irreverently or sacrilegiously since they do not tolerate inappropriate behavior and noise violating the spell. Sacred elements may appear mundane, yet they are held separately from the profane and appropriately purified, thus reflecting the focal process of contrasting the

sacred with the profane (Belk et al. 1989). As another property of the sacred, objects concretize the sacred, despite possibly appearing mundane (Belk et al. 1989). As an example, Belk et al. (1989) explain how a simple stone may embody sacred powers when its existence is understood through a creation myth, of being the tear of an animal.

2.3.4 Sacred Consumption

According to Belk et al. (1989), sacred consumption does not only involve consuming products, but sacredness may also be consumed with respect to time, place, people and experience. Sacred consumption can be defined through high levels of involvement and the reliability with which consumers are provided with self-transcending experiences. Sacred consumption elements evoke extraordinary sensations that may become ritualized, and even turned into habits. Belk et al. (1989) divide sacred consumption into two processes: a sacralization process and a maintenance process. According to Fernandez et al. (2011), sacralization occurs when an element is given a sacred symbolic meaning among a culture or a specific group. In the sacralization process, an object is metamorphosed into a sacred element through different means (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) suggest that in a contemporary consumer culture, while some ritualistic activities have been secularized, others have been revered, expressing the sacralization through ritual. Another means of sacralization is by pilgrimage: a journey travelled in order to get to the site where the sacred consumption occurs (Belk et al. 1989). For example, Belk & Costa (1998) suggest that a pilgrimage to the place and time of the mountain man myth cherishes egalitarianism and antiauthoritarian individualism. As a sacralization resource, Belk et al. (1989) describe how seemingly mundane objects may be treated as singular and mystic. These objects are quintessentially converted into the sacred by consumers' desires. In their study, Belk et al. (1989) noticed how consumers' urge for authenticity contributed to the sacralization process through quintessence: the more natural and pristine a place appeared to be, the more likely it was to be treated as being sacred, and reflecting a veneration of nature.

The other process involved in sacred consumption is maintenance. Maintenance activities that perpetuate sacredness prevent desacralization, in other words a loss of sacredness (Belk et al. 1989). For example, mistreatment of a sacred element, insufficient reverence and deviation from a

prescribed ritual, threaten the sacredness attached to an element (Belk et al. 1989). According to Belk et al. (1989), habituation and rationalization are embodiments of desacralization, causing a constant threat to the sacred (Belk et al. 1989). Habituation gradually turns a sacred object into something profane and worn one over time, albeit that time can also restore the sacredness of an element (Belk et al. 1989). Another form of desacralization is rationalization, which according to Belk et al. (1989), demystifies behavior by rationalizing actions and beliefs, and by stripping the mystery from the sacred element. Decontextualization, a form of desacralization, occurs when the sacred and the profane are mixed by removing the sacred from its context within which the sacredness originates (Belk et al. 1989). Belk et al. (1989) suggest that since advertising tears off the sacred from its original context, mixing it with the profane, it is thus regarded as a threat to sacredness.

Belk et al. (1989) present the separation of the sacred from the profane as a way of perpetuating sacredness. The perpetuating activity of separation may occur through appointing a special space for the sacred, or through its dwelling, as a home is a sacred place providing separation from the profane (Belk et al. 1989). According to Belk et al. (1989), as sacred elements may gradually lose their sacredness and turn into ordinary objects, numerous maintenance rituals, such as purifying repairing and displaying, are designed to sustain the sacred. These sacredness-maintaining rituals separate the sacred from the profane e.g. by prohibiting usage outside ritual occasions (Belk et al. 1989). The continuum of traditions and adhesion to ritual behaviors perpetuate and intensify the perception of an element held sacred. In their article Belk & Costa (1998), narrate how camp rules facilitate the separation of sacred time and place by establishing slower paced ‘rendezvous time’ in the modern mountain men rendezvous. Opposition to the profane city life is also maintained by committing to myths, communitas, unusual appearance and camp rituals such as mythic campfires.

2.4 Experience of Nature

The perspective on experiencing nature in the thesis, as well as in Canniford & Shankars’ (2013) article, is the theory of assemblage, initially introduced by Deleuze and Guattari 2008 (Canniford & Shankar 2013). The theory of assemblage suggests that consumers assemble diverse consumption resources into a totality, from which rendezvous and meanings of nature emerge. The

consumption resources constructing the assemblage of nature consist of, inter alia, mythical narratives and discourses embedded in rituals and practices (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), these resources and perceptions of nature create a mystic nexus with sacred nature. Canniford & Shankars (2013) suggest that experiences of nature are framed by romantic discourses presenting nature as external to social tension and technology even though the linkage with culture is apparent. Although the dualism between nature and culture is evident in experiential consumption in nature, Canniford & Shankar (2013) remark that consumption experiences reproduce romantic ideals.

2.4.1 Romantic Discourses of Nature

Prior studies of the romantic experiences of nature paradoxically proposed nature as an external subject to culture, while being deployed and interpreted by consumer culture and forged into commercial context (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), consumers tend to comprehend nature as clean, primitive and pristine place, which enacts as an antithesis to the obligations, materialism and hierarchies of modern civilization. In his article, Thompson (2004) suggests that Romantics regard the cultivation of naturalism as the vehicle to obtain esoteric self-fulfillment over the usage of science and technology. This Romantic idea of nature can be exploited and communicated in marketing products and places with naturalistic connotations, for example in marketing wilderness servicescapes (Thompson 2004). Wilderness servicescapes, as other servicescapes, are physical environments that provide a setting for cultural values to be converted into commercial offerings (Arnould & Thompson 2005). According to Arnould & Thompson (2005), servicescapes utilize mythical cultural narratives and romanticized discourses of nature to embellish commercial efforts, and to prevent potential conflicts between consumers' perceptions and material realities. Belk & Costa (1998) describe how the servicescapes of mountain man rendezvous serve mythical and romanticized experiences through, inter alia, mesmerizing camp fires, wood smoke scent and evergreen nature geographies. Hence, material geographies are a prerequisite in the process of reproducing romantic discourse (Canniford & Shankar 2013).

In their study Canniford & Shankar (2013) observed the framing within which romantic experiences of nature occurs, suggesting that assemblages of heterogeneous resources contribute to the reproduction of romantic ideologies. Although assemblages of nature represent fragility and freedom from socio-economic hierarchies, service structures evidently incorporate strains of social system and technological resources in the process of harnessing naturalistic experiences. Hence, Canniford & Shankar (2013) suggest that nature cannot romantically be defined as external to culture, but instead note that the contradictions stemming from the collision of naturalism, technology and socio-economic hierarchies are disposed of through purifying practices. The romantic discourses of external nature are preserved and reproduced through purifying practices performed by consumers in order to conceal the incorporation of nature and culture (Canniford & Shankar 2013). By purifying the assemblages of nature, consumers are able to experience nature from a romantic standpoint, and regard nature as an external ideal (Canniford & Shankar 2013).

2.4.2 Assembling Nature through Consumption Resources

Canniford & Shankar (2013) discovered three categories of heterogeneous consumption resources that consumers utilize to assemble nature: discursive resources, material resources and technological resources. Due to the perspective of the thesis, discursive resources are observed more specifically than material and technological resources. Canniford & Shankar (2013) note that according to prior studies, the romantic ideology of nature is constructed through sublime, sacred and primitive discourses that emphasize the externality of nature. These discursive resources, that consumers reproduce, are cultural scripts restructuring thoughts and desires related to experiencing nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013).

The concept of sublime nature refers to nature as a rewarding, renewing and restorative power that contribute to consumer's self-realization and the discovery of their authentic identity (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Canniford & Shankar (2013) describe nature as the ultimate place for a primitive sense of fear and a drive for survival to emerge. Furthermore, together with physical and self-realizing aspects, subliminal nature is discoursed through the narrative resources of mythic and heroic scripts. Experiences of sacred nature are understood as consumption magic, which restructures a consumer's thinking and feelings, fosters virtues and nurtures the perception of the

consumer being one with nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), discourses of sacred nature characterize nature as a divine entity with sacred power. The sacred power provides a consumer with a sense of externality to modern life and an interrelatedness of the body, mind and surroundings. As Canniford & Shankar (2013) describe in their article, some participants perceived the magic of experiencing nature through the materiality of nature, feeling unity with the sea embracing their body, while surfing.

According to Canniford & Shankar (2013) the last discourse constructing the romantic ideology of nature is primitive nature, in which attributes of sublime and sacred nature are combined in order to create a perception of primitivism. Primitivism is virtually an antithesis to modern life, seeking an escape from a stressful, technologized and complex life through the heroic ruggedness of premodern cultures that lived in harmony with nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013). The ethnography of Canniford & Shankar (2013) implies that the quest for primitivism is concurrently a pursuit to ameliorate any consequent ills of unhealthy urban living, and to discover heroic sensations and self-realization. The experience of primitivism calls for the undefiled materiality of nature or, at least, an ostensibly pristine nature through purifying practices. For example, according to Belk & Costa (1998), the modern mountain men select the rendezvous site long before the actual consumption assemblage, in order to find a pristine and ‘primitive camp’, in which vehicles and technology are prohibited or, at least, used out of sight. In addition, primitivism is manifested in campfires and accommodation, such as using a teepee (Belk & Costa 1998).

Material resources refer to the exploitation of desired geographies and the physical forces of nature that are derived from transient geographic coincidences (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), consumers resort to knowing, waiting, sensing and searching for the optimal natural environment, in order to locate themselves in places where geographic coincidences are most likely to occur. Local knowledge of nature’s contingent materials, as well as a search for the optimal natural environment, are needed to locate temporary coincidences, which are otherwise extremely difficult to predict (Canniford & Shankar 2013). In addition, Canniford & Shankar (2013) suggest that sensing nature by, *inter alia*, exhibiting sensory vigilance and waiting for nature to exercise temporal weather discipline, are also regarded as material resources

exploited by consumers. Even though material resources are resorted to in order to ostensibly harness natural forces, the sublime experience is effectively reinforced by the fact that nature is unpredictable and cannot be controlled (Canniford & Shankar 2013).

Together with discursive and material resources, consumers utilize technological resources in order to produce assemblages of nature. Canniford & Shankar (2013) characterize technological resources as technological tools that consumers employ to harness the power of nature. Technological resources match appropriate technological tools with geographic nature, in order to create frameworks for the desired experience, and to reconcile technology with discourses in order to create, for example, primitive meanings and experiences (Canniford & Shankar 2013). The last type of technological resource mentioned in Canniford & Shankar's (2013) article, is the predicting and managing of nature with technology. In their ethnography, Canniford & Shankar's (2013) discovered how online tools were used to schedule surfing and, moreover, some consumers paid for the surfing experience organized by service providers who employ a large scale of management technologies.

2.4.3 Conflicts and Betrayals in Assemblages of Nature

As mentioned in the previous chapter, discursive, material, and technological resources are combined in order to assemble nature. However, the interference of technology and service structures, as well as disagreements as to how nature should be consumed, complicate the fragile assemblage process and problematize the romantic notion of nature experiences (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Canniford & Shankar (2013) suggest that in an ideal world, consumption resources jointly create the desired assemblage of nature, but in reality, the assemblage process often fails to succeed, and the disharmony between consumption resources leads to a corruption of experiences. When such a betrayal occurs in the assemblage process, due to incompatible consumption resources, this thwarts the notion of nature as being external to culture, and threatens the romanticism in experiencing nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), especially complex combinations of consumption resources often result in betrayals that challenge consumers' perceptions of external nature. Canniford & Shankar (2013) remark that material and technological resources may fail to provide romantic ideals. The

materiality of nature always applies to sublime, sacred and primitive discourses, which ultimately frame the experience of nature, and the artificiality of technological tools may be too prominent to be disregarded. Furthermore, commercialization, for example through service structures and the usage of service technology, problematizes any ideals of primitivism and the sacred (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Commercialization draws economic value from experiences of nature which damages the notion of externality, and incorporates in the assemblage process the very same features of modern culture that consumers seek to escape from (Canniford & Shankar 2013).

Betrayals are not always unacceptable, despite the unsuccessful assemblage of desired experience, since acceptable betrayals in assembled resources paradoxically reinforce the notion of nature's externality, and reproduces discourses of 'romantic nature' (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Canniford & Shankar (2013) give an example of acceptable betrayal by referring to geographic-discursive betrayal which occur when nature shows its power against consumers' attempts to harness its materiality. Hence material resources fail to match prevailing romantic ideals and desired experiences of nature, but enhance the experience of 'external nature'. Other betrayals than geographic-discursive betrayals are more likely to be unacceptable (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), unacceptable betrayals occur especially in a technological-discursive context, emerging from an unsuccessful assemblage of resources that distinctly reveals the dualism of culture versus nature.

In his study of the natural health marketplace, Thompson (2004) explores the conflict between nature and technology, discovering how the marketplace mythology of the body's natural ability to heal itself, is contradicted by scientific views incorporated in the marketplace. The conflict underlines the dualism of holistic well-being and scientific medicine (Thompson 2004). Thompson (2004) suggests that science is seen as being artificial and alienated from the healing forces of nature, and even harmful to the body's own capacity for regeneration. However, the proponents of natural health, equally and paradoxically, rely on scientific evidence in promoting holistic healing options (Thompson 2004). According to Thompson (2004), by providing de facto medical explanations and effective medical remedies, technology and science are regarded as a threat to the natural health marketplace mythology that advocates organic connections with nature. In their article, Belk & Costa (1998) also present a betrayal in the assemblage of nature. Belk & Costa

(1998), suggest participants in the mountain man rendezvous pursue ideals of freedom and transcendence through invented traditions and primitive survival skills, such as fire making. However, these primitive practices performed in ‘primitive camps’ require costly and often inorganic equipment that ostensibly express nature and the past (Belk & Costa 1998). Belk & Costa (1998) also remark that, paradoxically, often a fee has to be paid in order to participate in the rendezvous.

As another example of contradictions in assemblages of nature, Peñaloza (2000) touches on nature by noting that rancher-capitalists cultivate romantic discourses of nature by pursuing a perception of livestock farming as being a natural and noble food-providing practice. In fact, the cattle industry is an epitome of human dominance over nature. Peñaloza (2000) discovered discourses of naturalism within commercial and breed ranchers’ visual marketing efforts in livestock shows: animal production was introduced through a romantic cowboy myth, characterized by freedom and individualism. Paradoxically, the existence of technicians supervising a production contradicted this perception (Peñaloza 2000). Peñaloza (2000) sums up the nature aspect of her study by remarking how livestock shows and rodeos demonstrate severe strains between animal production and naturalism. Peñaloza’s (2000) paradoxical example of naturalism within the cattle industry can be linked with Thompson’s (2004) previously mentioned point of view regarding Romantic and Gnostic mythos, assembling a marketplace despite contradicting ideas. In his article, Thompson (2004) suggests a marketplace can be a blend of Romantic ideas of how to pursue naturalism, and Gnostic ideas as how to harness those naturalistic values through science and technology. The mythical context here demonstrates how consumers seek to escape from modern life by searching for natural places and products, yet obtaining the naturalism through the enhancements of technological attributes (Thompson 2004).

2.4.4 Purifying Practices

According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), purifying practices are exercised in order to preserve the sense of nature’s externality, which constitutes romantic ideals and frames romantic experiences of nature. The underlying dualism of culture and nature restructures consumers’ thoughts and experiences in nature and is also reproduced by consumers in the process of

assembling nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013). However, when culture representing social and economic distress becomes too distinctive within an assemblage, its undermining effect on romanticism is overcome through purifying practices that preserve the notion of nature as being a pristine, isolated and clean realm (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Canniford & Shankar (2013) present how purifying practices utilize resources, such as masking and purging, in order to overcome any undesired outcomes relating to conflicting consumption resources, which threaten the romantic experiences, constructed through sublime, sacred, and primitive discourses.

The conflicts arising from consumers' reproduction of romantic ideals are caused by consumers' incompetence in applying appropriate discourses or technologies in a geographic context, or by the failure of material geography to match with discursive frameworks (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), within the category of geographic-discursive purifying, consumers overcome conflicts between material geographies and discourses by applying and reproducing discourses determined by nature, more specifically material-geographic conditions. As an example, Canniford & Shankar (2013) mention how surfers choose to apply a certain discourse depending on the quality of current waves and wind: the bigger the waves, the more likely a surfer is to apply sublime discourses, whereas in connection with small waves surfers presumably apply primitive and magical discourses. Canniford & Shankar (2013) suggest that technological-discursive and geographic-technological purifying include a careful matching of technologies with discourses and material geography. Even though technology is incorporated in experiences of nature, creation stories and other sacralizing narratives disguise the existence of technology and artificiality (Canniford & Shankar 2013). In addition, naturalistic and environmentally-friendly material choices, for example choosing wooden artifacts over plastic ones, promote the ideology of external nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013). According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), the category of geographic-technological purifying refers to overcoming contradictions by, *inter alia*, exercising localism or more drastically using urban technology to alter geographic spaces.

Canniford & Shankar (2013) present three practical measures to purify assemblages: masking, purging and redress. Masking practices illustrate how consumers cultivate masking, in order to hide the contradictions arising from assembled resources. The existence of unsuitable consumption

resources is kept silent, and it is forbidden to bring up any contradictions emerging from assembled nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Canniford & Shankar (2013) suggest that masking solely hides contradictions, whereas purging practices aim to do more than masking by purging the experience from assemblages. Community legitimation is a type of purging, in which communities establish legitimation for mixing nature with technology and which uses, *inter alia*, localism to attain consensus amongst consumers (Canniford & Shankar 2013). The purifying practices of masking and purging are prone to reproduce contradictions within assemblages, resulting in discontent amongst some consumers. The last and ultimate purifying practice presented by Canniford & Shankar (2013) seeks redress through treating fragile nature with caution, relocating consumers in the context of nature-culture, and replacing incompetent consumption resources with ameliorated ones. These improved consumption resources are deployed in order to diminish damage to material geographic material during experiences of nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013).

3 Overview of Finnishness and Sauna Culture

In 1929, based on historical writings, a historical researcher, Kaarlo Iivari Karttunen proposed that sauna had been enjoyed amongst the Finnish population for over a thousand years, functioning as a space for purification and healing (Särkikoski 2012). According to Karttunen (Särkikoski 2012), the sauna stove emerged at the same time as ovens and kitchen stoves and the warming, and comforting flame of these home commodities provided an opportune atmosphere for old Finnish songs and narratives to be retold. Although the Finnish sauna is both an innovative mixture of ancient Roman and Russian bathing cultures, as well as of European and Russian sauna cultures, in the Middle Ages it was redefined and converted into a novel and distinctive bathing genre, which has been preserved and promoted by Finns (Särkikoski 2012; Turun Sanomat 6/2015). For example, bathing children in the sauna is a peculiarity of Finnish sauna traditions (Vuorenjuuri 1967). A history review released by Suomen Saunaseura ry in 1997 portrayed sauna as an institution acknowledged as a nation symbol for a young country in the process of establishing its own identity through common traditions, values and habits (Särkikoski 2012). Correspondingly, a theologian, Risto Pulkkinen, concentrating in his dissertation on the ideological history of the sauna, encapsulated the essence of the Finnish sauna as a pathfinder for Finnishness, which ultimately can be regarded as the first sauna-related myth within Finnish culture (Särkikoski 2012).

In the middle of the 17th century, a professor at the Academy of Turku, Mikael Wexionius, portrayed the Finnish sauna behavior as follows: all the Finns are diligent sauna bathers and they are fond of rushing out from a hot sauna even in the coldest freeze to pour water from the well or lake onto their naked bodies (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Therefore, according to Wexionius, Finns will have their body parts toughened in order to be able to endure hard work (Vuorenjuuri 1967). In 1891, a Swedish doctor, Richard Hogner, published an article on the Finnish sauna in Hälsovänneren paper, noting that Finns cannot live without taking a sauna at least once a week (Särkikoski 2012). Nowadays, according to Heinonen & Peltonen (2013), taking a sauna bath is characterized as luxury consumption in everyday Finnishness everydayness. Every Finnish family has at least one sauna, and some might even have two; one at home, and one in the countryside alongside a summer cottage (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Särkikoski (2012) notes

that even though principles of the sauna habit are the same for every Finn, details and particularities of taking a sauna remain private information. In addition, Särkikoski (2012) suggests that the Finnish sauna is the world's best sauna, according to the Finns. Although sauna is regarded as the most beloved cultural institution in Finland, paradoxically the Finnish government has paid only little attention to preserving and developing sauna culture (Särkikoski 2012). However, an independent organization called Suomen Saunaseura ry (the Finnish Sauna Society) has made efforts to promote the Finnish sauna traditions, and redefine the concept of sauna for almost eight decades (Särkikoski 2012).

In this chapter, firstly the notion of the Finnishness is reviewed in order to form an understanding of how the Finnish sauna culture can be regarded as a pathfinder for Finnishness, and why Finns have eagerly adopted sauna culture as their own. Secondly the history of sauna is briefly surveyed followed by the emergence of the Finnish sauna. After the historical perspective, sauna consumption and key attributes of sauna are examined. Lastly the chapter characterizes the Finnish sauna culture by presenting beliefs and rituals related to sauna.

3.1 Finnishness

Firstly, in this section, the concept of national self-image, consisting of national identity and national mentality, is presented. After this, the notion of egalitarian individualism, with its core idea of equality, is discussed.

3.1.1 National Identity and Self-image

In his article, Peltonen (2000) defines the concept of national self-image as a mixture of national identity and national mentality whereas national stereotypes are generally perceived as derisive depictions introduced by neighboring nationalities. A national identity is formed through common symbols and rituals shared by the citizens of a nation (Peltonen 2000). According to Peltonen (2000), national mentality, in turn, is more of an unconscious and permanent concept that has gradually evolved over time. Although national identity and mentality construct the concept of national self-image, Peltonen (2000) states that the national self-image is more 'invented' and does

not necessarily reflect the image perceived by other nations. The discourse of Finnishness circulating the notion of national self-image holds a mythical sense, telling a story about the Finnish origins and existence of the Finns (Peltonen 2000).

Peltonen (2000) notes that the Finnish national self-image has been under turbulence for many decades, but throughout history there has been a typical negativity and self-deprecation in how Finns see themselves. The most dominant characteristics of Finnishness are oftentimes depicted in a negative light: typical notions of a Finnish self-image within Finnish discourses are 'Finnish boozing mentality' and 'backwoods mentality', both of which are shadowed by a belittling tone (Peltonen 2000). However, there has also been a positive connotation to the Finnish 'backwoods mentality' as in some cases it has been connected with the Finnish capacity for accomplishing things without unnecessary fuss (Peltonen 2000). Hence, according to Peltonen (2000), the Finnish spirit called '*sisu*' is closely related to the notion of a 'backwoods mentality' as well as to 'the Finnishness of Finnish men' in a positive sense. A positive self-image has also been seen in the discourse regarding the Finnish soldiers during World War II, as the Finnish soldiers, skilled in fighting in the forests, were seen as intellectual (Peltonen 2000).

According to Peltonen (2000), the political changes in the early 20th century had a great impact on the Finnish national self-image. The strengthening of labor movement, the General Strike and the Labor Party's success among other political changes affected on the general atmosphere, leading to the breakdown of the national self-image (Peltonen 2000). Peltonen (2000) suggest that the elite of the Finnish society began to distinguish themselves from the 'rank and file' by adopting a disparaging attitude towards the working classes and people living in the countryside. At the same time, during the period of the second phase in the development of nationalism (1870s to the 1920s), the Finnish language became an even more important aspect of the national self-image and has since been a dominant attribute of Finnishness (Peltonen 2000). The procedure of adopting an official language in Finland differed from many other European countries. The language of the 'common man' was being declared an official language, which boosted the self-image of lower classes and, in turn, the Swedish-speaking elite was the one being educated in the new linguistic standard (Peltonen 2000). The Finnish language, as an official language, empowered and unified the national self-image. However, as highbrow culture wasn't expressed in the Finnish language,

Finnish culture was declared to be a less developed and uncivilized culture. This notion is still somewhat present in discourses of Finnishness (Peltonen 2000).

The Finnish self-image is predominantly defined by nature-related aspects. According to Peltonen (2000), Finland's beautiful lake landscape has been, and still is, a national symbol of Finnishness. Although the comparison between the coastal and inland environments has continued to be the divider between a civilized culture and its hinterland. At the end of the period of self-administration under Russia, different landscape characters began to define Finnishness, declaring those living in, predominantly Finnish-speaking, inland 'wilderness' to be inferior to, predominantly Swedish-speaking, coastal residents (Peltonen 2000). Defining the self-image of Finnishness based on the Finnish language was then overshadowed by landscape types: coastal residents were seen as lively, superficial and even hostile, whereas the inland people of inland were classified as peaceful, lazy and yet profound (Peltonen 2000).

According to Peltonen (2000), in the late 20th century media portrayed the image of the 'forest Finn', who grew up in an uncivilized hinterland surrounded by pristine nature. The image of the 'forest Finn' was strongly contrasted with the 'old civilized nations' in order to rationalize the inferiority of Finnishness (Peltonen 2000). The mythical image of Finns being forest people approaches something reminiscent of the Robin Hood legend. However, the Finnish forestry image is often characterized through a negative evaluation not related to these other romanticized forest images that emerged in Middle Europe (Peltonen 2000). Peltonen (2000) notes that the national self-image of a 'backwoods mentality' was therefore shaped by the mythical concepts derived from the historical environment of Finland. However, the myth of 'Finns hailing from the forest' does not hold true, since for most of history Finnish settlements were in coastal areas and only a small number of inhabitants populated the inland (Peltonen 2000). Although the myth does not meet the reality, Peltonen (2000) suggests it is essential in creating the Finns' perception of self.

3.1.2 Egalitarian Individualism

Many researchers have claimed that the Western world, particularly Nordic countries, can be characterized by egalitarian individualism (Gullestad 2002). When it comes to studying the

connection between egalitarianism, nationalism and racism, Nordic countries provide a special setting and context in which to examine the subject (Gullestad 2002). According to Gullestad (2002), equality, the core idea of egalitarianism, can be considered as being an imaginary sameness, which promotes a growing ethnification of national identity. Moreover, Gullestad (2002) suggests that when talking about group identity, organizational boundaries and cultural substance interact with each other rather than being opposing approaches. Gullestad (2002) also remarks that in connection with the sense of sameness, ethnic dimensions including culture and ancestry are becoming more and more essential part of majority nationalism at the present time.

According to Gullestad (2002), when social actors strive to reaffirm the notion of sameness they end up strengthening their individual value. Social actors seek support for their desired identity amongst those who are considered similar. Thus, sameness is paradoxically a way to recognize and obtain a feeling of individual identity (Gullestad 2002). The concept of egalitarian individualism encompasses the notion of ‘we’ as those who built the surrounding culture. Gullestad (2002) notes that this standpoint often excludes actors with different background, as the external actors are not regarded as similar. Especially in the Nordic countries the notion of ‘we built the country’ is tenacious (Gullestad 2002) bolstered by the mythological narratives (Peltonen 2000). As a conclusion Gullestad (2002) depicts egalitarian individualism as a part of nationalism in which history, ancestry, religion and morality are combined in a consistent entity.

3.2 History of the Finnish Sauna

Despite the fact that Finns consider taking a sauna to be a very Finnish tradition and a patriotic institution, different kinds of steam rooms resembling saunas have existed throughout human history (Turun Sanomat 6/2015; Vuorenjuuri 1967). The first saunas are believed to have appeared over 6000 years ago amongst prehistoric Finno-Ugric people (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Instead of being similar to contemporary saunas with benches and stoves these ancient saunas were pits in the ground (Särkikoski 2012; Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Even though it hasn’t been determined where and when the first saunas existed sauna has served diverse purposes providing a space for medical activities as well as spiritual practices in different cultures and continents (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

A vivid Roman steam bathing culture has been considered to have affected the formation of the Finnish sauna culture (Särkikoski 2012; Vuorenjuuri 1967). Later, in the Middle Ages, Finnish saunas were strongly influenced by European and Russian sauna cultures (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Sauna culture was convenient for the Finnish mentality (Vuorenjuuri 1967), and in addition sauna served as an appropriate solution for the cold climate in Finland (Särkikoski 2012). Hence, taking a sauna was embraced by Finns as a ‘cultural loan’, and evolved into a genuine Finnish tradition and a salient part of consumer behavior (Vuorenjuuri 1967). For the most fanatic sauna bathers it is disconcerting to accept that sauna might have its origins in Sweden or that Russians were similarly eager to take a sauna (Vuorenjuuri 1967).

3.2.1 Origins in Russian and European Sauna Cultures

Most researchers argue that sauna has spread to other countries from Russia, where sauna culture was an old-established tradition to the extent that the origins of sauna in Russia cannot be determined (Vuorenjuuri 1967). A debate over the origins of Finnish-Russian sauna traditions in 1889 was probably the first attempt to attach Finnishness to institutional sauna culture, and since then a lively debate regarding the Finnishness of sauna has persisted (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Saunas, in their different forms, were also well-known and widely used in European cities in the Middle Ages, having an impact on the Finnish sauna traditions (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). However, as the number of public saunas increased, and the ideal of purity shifted in the 17th century Middle-Europe, the perception of sauna was changed into an unhealthy, depraved and even punishable habit (Särkikoski 2012; Turun Sanomat 6/2015; Vuorenjuuri 1967). The perception of a sauna as a depraved place draw from the fact that brothels often operated in the same locations as saunas, resulting in doctors preaching about the health threats, such as syphilis, of sauna (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

In the 17th century, sauna culture gradually declined in urban European cities, appearing only in the hinterland of the mountainous areas of Europe, and yet, conversely, establishing its status amongst Finns (Vuorenjuuri 1967). According to Vuorenjuuri (1967), since the 1750s taking a sauna has been a common habit amongst Finns, who took a sauna bath at least once a week, and in summertime once a day. By the 19th century European sauna culture had completely vanished

due to a negative perception of sauna and a disapproval of wasting firewood. Yet, at the same time in Finland, sauna was considered as a sacred cultural heritage, often being the only hygienic place available to give birth, practice soul purification and cleansing or purify a deceased family member (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

3.2.2 The Finnish Sauna Emerges

Kaarlo Iivari Karttunen, a historical researcher, suggested that sauna has existed amongst Finnish people for over a thousand years (Särkikoski 2012), yet the written literature of the Finnish saunas mostly emerged in the 20th century (Vuorenjuuri 1967). However, there is some written documentary evidence of Finnish sauna culture before the 20th century. For example, Finnish emigrants spread sauna culture all over the world decades ago as the migration from Finland progressed (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Indeed, the primary written literature of sauna activity amongst the North-American Indian tribes dates back to the 17th century. During these colonial times, Indians were noted to taking a sauna with Finnish immigrants, who also shared a passion for hot steam rooms (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Indians dwelling on the east coast called Finnish immigrants ‘hikimajihmiset’ (sweat-hut-people) or ‘white-men-who-are-similar-to-us’ (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Hence the harmony between nature and sauna-loving Finns and Indians resulted in Finnish migration settlements being left unharmed during the first Indian Wars (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

In the 1920s and 1930s, sauna culture changed drastically alongside urbanization, as Finns had previously lived in rural sites, where life was characterized by peasantry culture (Lahtinen 2006; Vuorenjuuri 1967). During this time, sauna customs were brought into cities by people moving from rural sites to urban areas, since sauna represented shared values, traditionalism and safety (Särkikoski 2012). At the turn of the 20th century, the popularity, awareness and appreciation of the Finnish sauna temporarily faded, as sauna was perceived as a representation of debauchery, an inappropriate and filthy habit of the poor, and a place for diseases to be transmitted (Vuorenjuuri 1967). In addition, in the 1920s the emergence of sewerage systems and water mains in urban areas provided novel ways to cleanse (Lahtinen 2006).

After the turn of the 20th century, enlightened people began to reappraise sauna culture and began to consider sauna in a positive light (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Although sauna still wasn't recommended to the Finnish intelligentsia, it was considered as a suitable and cheap means of ablution for the proletariat and peasantry (Vuorenjuuri 1967). In the 1930s, sauna bathing began to revive with altered functions, beliefs and rituals, although the period of disapproval left its mark on sauna culture (Vuorenjuuri 1967). In addition, in the first half of 20th century, romantic nationalism slowly started to bring back the former appreciation and value of sauna, as sauna emerged in art, literature and portrayals of ideal sauna men (Vuorenjuuri 1967). In these portrayals, sauna men were depicted as heroic archetypes who, lacking a real sauna room, would build a primitive sauna with their bare hands from surrounding materials of nature, fiercely throw water onto rocks and sit in the heat of '*löyly*' for over an hour (Vuorenjuuri 1967). In addition, in the era of romantic nationalism, the occupation of professional '*saunottaja*' or sauna attendant, emerged (Vuorenjuuri 1967). According to estimations, there was around 300 sauna attendants, who would heat up and clean the sauna, guide sauna bathers to the sauna, create an appropriate '*löyly*' and then cleanse the bathers to purify them physically and mentally (Vuorenjuuri 1967).

Although the recession of the 1930s in Finland led to economic difficulties, the ideals of home, religion and patriotism gained strength (Lahtinen 2006). Hence, according to Lahtinen (2006), the Finnish countryside was considered to exhibit authentic and pure Finnishness and thus happiness was sought in rural areas remote from urban stress. Taking a sauna bath, especially on Saturdays, was ultimately the only sauna activity that remained through the 1930s evolution of sauna culture, while old-established sauna activities, such as childbirth and cleaning of the deceased, could be performed elsewhere (Särkikoski 2012). The 1930s were golden times for the Finnish sauna culture also because in 1937 a Finnish sauna culture association, *Suomalaisen Saunan Ystävät ry* (later *Suomen Saunaseura ry*), was established, and professor of hygiene, K.F. Hirvisalo, was nominated as a chairman to promote the hygienic benefits of the Finnish sauna (Vuorenjuuri 1967; Särkikoski 2012).

At the beginning of 20th century, the idea of the Finnish sauna as a way to better personal hygiene emerged also in Sweden and Norway (Särkikoski 2012). As a result, a Norwegian sauna association, operating with voluntary health organizations, was eager to provide a program

regarding how to build a sauna in every Norwegian home, in accordance with the Finnish exemplar (Särkikoski 2012). However, due to a lack of bathing places, the Norwegian authorities decided to concentrate on increasing the number of public saunas (Särkikoski 2012). At the end of the 1940s, just after the Second World War and the Continuation war, the socio-political debate over hygiene in urban areas lead to Finnish cities investigating the current situation of saunas and possibilities for enhancing public sauna conditions. However, it turned out to be difficult to establish urban saunas as public baths (Särkikoski 2012). During the time between the end of the Second World War and the 1970s, economic growth and material welfare amongst Finns increased drastically, leading to a decline in privately owned public saunas and, in turn, an increase in the number of in-home and condominium saunas (Särkikoski 2012). Even though consumption gradually increased, and the consumption of durable goods became general, the primitive traditions related to sauna culture remained in Finnish consumers' lives (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013).

3.3 Consumption of Different Sauna Types

Released in the 1920s an encyclopedia called 'Pieni Tietosanakirja' defined the sauna as a building where one can bathe and sweat in hot and steamy air, by throwing water onto a stove filled with rocks (Särkikoski 2012). According to the encyclopedia, sauna was categorized as one of the bath types that serve medical and cleansing purposes (Särkikoski 2012). Sauna has also been described as a high-level technical solution for a cold climate, such as in Finland, as the heat in the sauna is effectively and economically achieved and maintained (Särkikoski 2012). Sauna is a place, where one should not speak loudly or move around, especially around the hot stove, from which 'löyly', a cloud of steam, is created (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013; Turun Sanomat 6/2015). 'Löyly' is the central component of the Finnish sauna described by Heinonen & Peltonen (2013) as follows: "*Löyly is the rush of hot steam that the stones in the stove instantly produce, as one pours water over them every now and then when enjoying the sauna bath*".

3.3.1 Sauna Types

Until World Wars one and two smoke saunas were favored, especially in the countryside (Särkikoski 2012; Turun Sanomat 6/2015), and according to Mather & Kaups (1963) in 1937 around 80 per cent of Finnish farms had a sauna. In the countryside sauna was and still is usually a detached and single-storey building with two rooms: one for bathing and the other for dressing, although the structure and size of each sauna may vary depending on its function and the size of the family (Mather & Kaups 1963). The room for bathing typically has bench seating, 'lauteet', erected four to five feet above the floor, where sauna bathers either sit or lie down to enjoy the 'löyly' steam (Mather & Kaups 1963). People with Finnish origins living in the rural Karjala region called sauna 'kyly' (Vuorenjuuri 1967).

After the two World Wars, saunas with chimney flues become more popular than smoke saunas due to commercialization, new consumption behavior and the emergence of factory-made saunas that were cheaper than smoke saunas (Särkikoski 2012; Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Mass production of electric saunas commenced in the 1950s, yet the real revolution in electric saunas took place in the 1970s as construction companies started to equip apartments with electric saunas (Suomen Saunaseura ry). As a result, in the 1980s the chairman of Suomen Saunaseura ry, Juhani Peräsalo, called for the preservation of traditional sauna types arguing that electric saunas will strip off the twilight ambiance and heating rituals from sauna culture (Särkikoski 2012). According to Särkikoski (2012), a heated room cannot be called sauna unless it is within a prescribed range of humidity and temperature: referring to the former chairman of Suomen Saunaseura ry, Juhani Peräsalo, Särkikoski presents the norm of humidity as 40-70g/kg and a norm of temperature as 80-100 °C. However, according to a study of apartment saunas conducted by Tampereen Teknillinen Korkeakoulu (Tampere University of Technology) in 1987 (Särkikoski 2012), sauna culture was altered to fit the urban context as the modern urban sauna bather's preferences deviated from previous ideals: only eight per cent of the respondents took a sauna at 90-100 degrees and as many as a fifth of the respondents preferred their sauna bath to be heated to 60-65 degrees.

As a result of urbanization, after the World Wars the concept of taking a sauna was redefined, as the sauna bath became more individualized. The notion of 'family sauna' emerged referring to saunas at home, inside saunas built in multi-family houses and summer cottage saunas (Särkikoski 2012). Shared saunas in apartment houses were rare until the 1950s but as more people moved to the cities the number of cellar saunas in blocks of flats started to increase (Särkikoski 2012). These cellar saunas were often regarded as cramped, insipid and lacking the authentic sauna atmosphere and thus communal saunas were mostly set up in at swimming pools (Särkikoski 2012). In his book released in 1960s Vuorenjuuri (1967) argued that saunas were relatively and unduly modest and cramped located e.g. in the outermost location of summer cottage courtyard and called for larger scales and special characteristics for Finnish saunas. According to Vuorenjuuri (1967), Finnish saunas had followed the pattern of smallness and modesty due to beliefs and ideals shaped by commercial discourses and competition. Särkikoski (2012) notes that over long period of time saunas in apartment houses have shifted location from cramped cellars to more open top floors until the 2010s.

Industrial institutions had used saunas to increase collective hygiene and the wellbeing of their workers for decades, whereas companies and organizations did not begin to seek to improve their image and internal staff relations by utilizing companies' in-house saunas until the 1970s (Särkikoski 2012). However, at the same time, privately-owned public saunas suffered a decline in popularity, as saunas in conjunction with communal swimming baths, companies' in-house saunas, in-home saunas and apartment block saunas became more popular, due to increased material welfare (Särkikoski 2012). By the 1960s there were 6.5 persons per sauna in Finland (Mather & Kaups 1963). From the 1960s to the beginning of the 1990s there were numerous attempts to reclaim public saunas, but interest in public saunas had disappeared and municipalities were not eager to financially support privately-owned public saunas (Särkikoski 2012).

3.3.2 Sauna - an Essential Part of Summer Cottage Life

Summer cottage culture cannot be defined by consumption of specific goods only, but instead it can be perceived as a special place of consumption (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Although

summer cottages are common to all Nordic countries, Finland is probably the leading country in when it comes to the number of summer cottages (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). According to Heinonen & Peltonen (2013), there are approximately 550,000 summer cottages in Finland. The most desirable ones are situated near a lake or by the sea. The era between the 1950s and the 1970s was the golden age for summer cottages during which the number of summer cottages quadrupled (Särkikoski 2012). However, due to a rapid increase in lakeside summer cottage saunas, the Finnish government passed a law to restricting building near the shoreline, in 1969 (Särkikoski 2012).

Finnish people tend to use summer cottages as often as they can, during weekends and especially during summer vacations (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Heinonen & Peltonen (2013) suggest that it is common for most summer cottages to include a sauna, which is usually detached from the main building. According to Heinonen & Peltonen (2013), despite and perhaps due to post-World War 2 urbanization, the number of summer cottage owners has grown steadily. During the 1960s, owning a summer cottage was somewhat of a luxury, but since the sixties it has become more and more widespread (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Hence taking a sauna in the countryside has remained a special characteristic of the Finnish culture, although people also take a sauna bath in urban homes (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Sauna is also an essential part of the Finns' holidays such as Christmas and Midsummer, which are often celebrated at their summer cottages (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). For example, during the feast of Midsummer the sauna is specially decorated with birch twigs and saplings, and filled with beliefs and traditions that spring from the sauna mythology (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

Heinonen & Peltonen (2013) describe consumption in summer cottages as anti-modern with a tendency to go back towards childhood, and present summer cottages as spaces free from technology and other usual in-home activities. These arguments are rationalized by the backwardness of summer cottage equipment leading to old-fashioned activities such as reading and fishing (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). Heinonen & Peltonen (2013) suggest that as summer cottages are usually more primitive than homes, and often lacking running water, taking a sauna might be the only place to get clean. The notion of childhood in connection with summer cottages is based on the fact that many summer cottages have served as homes for either one of the parents

or grandparents (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). As summer cottages tend to be primitive and often lacking common household technology, taking a sauna as a summer cottage activity remains, expressing a return to the primitive and an escape from the modern world (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013).

Referring to a survey carried out in May 2015 by the market research company Taloustutkimus, and commissioned by the Association for Finnish Work, Suomalaisen Työn Liitto (Turun Sanomat 7/2015), Finns would rather warm up a sauna than clean their home. According to the survey of over a thousand participants, almost one in four Finns named heating an outdoor sauna as their favorite summertime chore. The study also revealed how gender roles are embedded in household chores: men were found to prefer ‘manly’ and more physical activities such as chopping wood and warming a sauna, whereas women preferred lighter work such as picking berries and weeding the flowerbeds (Turun Sanomat 7/2015).

3.4 Characterizing the Finnish Sauna Culture

Rituals and traditions related to the Finnish sauna culture can be regarded as a socio-cultural heritage that is passed on from generation to generation (Suomen Saunaseura ry). According to Mather & Kaups (1963), sauna is a Finnish steam bathhouse that may cautiously be regarded as a cultural index marking a related group of cultural phenomena in a Finnish cultural complex. Powerful characteristics and ideals are embedded in the mythology of sauna culture as the Finnish sauna is often associated with beliefs in purity, nature, ‘*sisu*’, sacredness and physical as well as psychological well-being (Suomen Saunaseura ry; Turun Sanomat 7/2015). According to an utterance from the 18th century, the stubborn people of Finland have reprehensibly linked sauna with divinity and regard the sauna room as a sanctuary (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Some writers have extolled the sauna as a source of Finnish ‘*sisu*’, which was manifested in bravery, calmness and determination (Mather & Kaups 1963). Although there are many beliefs, myths and rituals related to sauna, sauna still hasn’t been detached from the mundane context of Finnish everydayness.

Depictions of sauna bathing in national folklore established sauna as a part of Finnish culture, especially in the field of literature (Vuorenjuuri 1967). The Kalevala, a national epic conveying

oral folklore and mythology compiled and written by Elias Lönnrot, has abundant references to sauna as a significant component of an ancient Finnish culture (Mather & Kaups 1963; Suomen Saunaseura ry). As a specialist in folk medicine, Elias Lönnrot understood and communicated the versatile use of sauna as a place for purification, giving birth, dying and practicing magic (Suomen Saunaseura ry). Accordingly, every hero in the Kalevala had his or her own sauna (Suomen Saunaseura ry). For example, Ilmarinen takes a sauna in order to be purified ready for his search for a bride, and Väinämöinen heats up a sauna to expel diseases transmitted by the Witch of the North, Pohjan akka (Vuorenjuuri 1967). The Kalevala also presents the usage of sauna as a place used for malt making, childbirth and expelling evil spirits, and narrates how Finns take a sauna in extremely high temperatures almost every evening (Mather & Kaups 1963). Hence the Kalevala was an essential component in the process of sauna becoming a focal symbol of Finnishness (Suomen Saunaseura ry).

3.4.1 Roles of Sauna in the Past

In the past sauna was an essential part of Finns' life events such as birth, upbringing, marriage and death (Turun Sanomat 6/2015; Vuorenjuuri 1967). Until the 1930s a Finnish woman typically gave birth in the sauna: consequently, a midwife was called 'sauna-akka' (sauna-hag) and a parturient was known as 'saunanainen' (sauna-woman) (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). In addition to purifying skin, in the 18th century sauna whisks were used to slap crying children in a hot sauna in order to make them silent and well-behaved (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Crying would usually stop when a child passed out from whisk slapping and the procedure was repeated if crying continued (Vuorenjuuri 1967). The deceased were carried on a board to the sauna, where the dead body was washed and laid out by specialized women called 'kuolettajanaiset' (death women) (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). After the purification ceremonies, the dead body was carried to a drying barn to await for a burial (Turun Sanomat 6/2015).

For marriageable young women, sauna provided tinder for an amorous atmosphere, and brides and grooms were purified in a home sauna prior to marriage ceremonies (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Vuorenjuuri (1967) suggests that the bridal sauna was introduced to the Finnish people not earlier than in the middle of the 17th century, and this ceremonial habit spread only to the Karelia region

and the South-Western part of Finland. The bride was cleansed by her friends or nominated persons in a ritualistic bridal sauna the day before the wedding (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Supplied with alcoholic drinks, beer and coffee and the like, the bridal sauna was decorated with leaves and straw. After the purification practices, metal objects, such as bells and dishes, were clanked in order to make a loud noise outside the sauna (Vuorenjuuri 1967). These old customs might be the reason why sauna is considered sacred to some extent, even today (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013).

Even though sauna has a positive connotation, the devil and the spirits of the deceased are oftentimes mentioned when defining how to act in the sauna (Suomen Saunaseura ry). According to an old myth each and every sauna has its own sauna gnome, which was called 'kylyn isäntä' (host of sauna) in the Karjala region (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Vuorenjuuri (1967) narrates that because of the sauna gnome a sauna bather had to act politely and quietly in the sauna, and bring him a gift, for example a log. A sauna bather also had to thank the gnome for a peaceful sauna bath and close his or her eyes when entering and leaving the sauna (Vuorenjuuri 1967). According to an old myth a man should not take a sauna after six on Saturdays due to a threat of evil, even though the sauna is otherwise considered the most sacred place in the home and described as a warm, comforting lap (Suomen Saunaseura ry). If the rule of not taking a sauna after six on Saturdays is disobeyed the devil might appear and punish the bather or the spirits of the deceased might be lured to take an evening sauna (Suomen Saunaseura ry).

3.4.2 Purity

Throughout Finnish history, sauna has been considered a place in which to purify one's soul, and according to mythology a soul rests in sauna (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). As a matter of fact, the Finno-Ugric word '*löyly*' meant not only the steam rising from the stove, but also the human soul (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). As mentioned previously, Finnish sauna habits also related to purification have also been influenced by Russian sauna culture (Särkikoski 2012; Turun Sanomat 6/2015). It was a common habit in Russia to utilize baking ovens as saunas as the bather would crawl into an oven, close the oven door, slap their itchy body parts with a whisk and take advantage of the afterheat from baking (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Vuorenjuuri (1967) explains that after the ritual a bather usually went outside, poured cold water onto his or her body, and lay

down to rest. The habit was especially common amongst healing practitioners and hard-working people who would get really dirty (Vuorenjuuri 1967). According to Vuorenjuuri (1967), it wasn't uncommon for sick people to die in a hot oven during the 'healing' sauna treatment.

After the First World War, the understanding of bacteria and their link to personal hygiene emerged, resulting in a strongly emphasized purity amongst Finns. The threat of mysterious bacteria lurking, especially in urban areas, was reflected in excessive purification practices and a widely found bacteriophobia (Lahtinen 2006). Lahtinen (2006) remarks that soap advertising during that time exploited the image of saunas to evoke an association with ultimate purity. According to Lahtinen (2006), after the First World War, beauty queen competitions emerged in Finland as Finns were eager to prove Finnish women were beautiful and European looking. In these beauty pageants the purity and virginal innocence of the competitors were emphasized as 'sauna-fresh' purity and naturalness, and these were salient ideals in Finnish society at the time (Lahtinen 2006).

Sauna whisks (birch bundles or 'vihta'), are traditionally felt to enable Finns to attain appropriate purity (Suomen Saunaseura ry). During the Second World War, Finland ran out of high-quality soap: the only type of soap available contained mostly sand. Hence, propaganda advised Finns to cleanse themselves by taking a sauna and using a sauna whisk instead (Lahtinen 2006). The military also took part in the debate on national hygiene by ruling that Finnish soldiers had to take a sauna at least once a week in order to be properly clean (Mather & Kaups 1963). In the 18th century, an Italian travel writer Giuseppe Acerbin depicted how Finns rub and beat their body with sauna whisks made from birch branches so that their skin would look like raw meat (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Typically, sauna whisks are used to beat the body while sitting on a sauna bench (Mather & Kaups 1963). It is an unwritten rule to make a whisk from birch switches (Mather & Kaups 1963). Especially in the countryside people still use birch whisks to slap their skin repeatedly in order to obtain a great smell and smooth skin (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013).

3.4.3 Nature Relatedness and Primitivism

Nature relatedness and the search for primitivism are evident within sauna culture, as commodities and activities related to taking a sauna express the ideal of the return to nature and the past. For example, sauna bather may take a sauna for a couple of hours, repeatedly washing, rinsing, whipping the body with a birch whisk, and occasionally popping out of the sauna to cool down (Mather & Kaups 1963). There are different ways to cool off such as dipping in a lake or a snowbank or throwing cold water over one's naked body (Mather & Kaups 1963). In 1973, history researcher, H.G. Porthan, wrote that communal saunas used by villagers were lacking in modesty, as both genders would take a sauna together and then run outside naked to take a dip or dive into a snowdrift (Vuorenjuuri 1967). According to the Italian travel writer Giuseppe Acerbin, who also observed the Finnish sauna in the 18th century, men and women take a sauna naked, unashamedly exposing their bodies, yet not showing any sexual interest towards each other (Vuorenjuuri 1967). The innocent and primitive nakedness surprised foreigners, as people unknown to each other would take a joint sauna and women were naked not only in sauna but would undress in a hut and even walk longer distances naked, out in the open air in order to get to the sauna (Vuorenjuuri 1967).

In his book, Vuorenjuuri (1967) remarks that in comparison with other sweat baths, the Finnish sauna has been the most vital and widespread sweat bath culture, due to the elaborate commercialization and industrialization of saunas and sauna stoves. However, Vuorenjuuri (1967) notes that commercialization is a threat to the authentic sauna culture as saunas are becoming smaller and excessively standardized. According to Vuorenjuuri (1967), commercial success determines which attributes of the sauna continue to exist, and at the same time tends to overlook pleasure, atmosphere and quality related to authentic Finnish saunas. Vuorenjuuri (1967) suggests that despite the number of saunas being greater than ever before, sauna culture has lost its authenticity, as sauna bathers rush in and out of small electric sauna booths lacking the primitive touch of burning firewood. However, taking a sauna in the countryside and summer cottages has remained a central component of the Finnish sauna culture (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013). The enduring consumption of saunas and summer cottages in the rural sites away from urban life exhibits the quest for primitivism, even today (Heinonen & Peltonen 2013).

3.4.4 Mental and Physical Healing Properties

Taking a sauna is found to be a healthy activity with a variety of effects on the human body and mind (Suomen Saunaseura ry). A great number of the physiological benefit are attached to taking a sauna, and accordingly, a Finnish proverb notes: “if the sauna and brandy cannot help a man, death is near at hand” (Mather & Kaups 1963). Acclaimed Finnish author, Aleksis Kivi, depicted sauna and the steam bath of the sauna ‘löyly’ in his most significant novel, *The Seven Brothers* (Seitsemän veljestä) as follows: The hotter the ‘löyly’, the better its healing effect and power (Suomen Saunaseura ry). Referring to the health benefits of taking a sauna, even the late President of Finland, Urho Kekkonen, stated in 1925 that sauna is appropriate add-on for sports because a ‘löyly’ has positive effects on sporting performance (Särkikoski 2012).

The first scientific research on the Finnish sauna was conducted in 1765 when a Swedish doctor, Anton R. Martin, observed the impacts on health of taking a sauna (Vuorenjuuri 1967). According to the study it was detrimental to take children to sauna as they were likely to get constipation from excessive sauna bathing and possibly die from it (Vuorenjuuri 1967). The study also suggested that sauna would make a bather happier and more flexible after hard working. Yet, sauna was denounced as being unhealthy because the heat burns the body, suffocates, emasculates and makes men look older (Vuorenjuuri 1967). In 1933, in his pioneering dissertation entitled ‘Tutkimuksia suomalaisesta saunasta’ (Studies of the Finnish sauna) Risto Lundgren focused on health issues related to taking a sauna; the dissertation revealed that there were health indications regarding blood circulation, breathing and metabolism related to taking a sauna that needed more recognition from medicine (Särkikoski 2012). Lundgren also discovered that Finns weren’t aware that a sauna bath has physical impacts on the human body (Särkikoski 2012).

Around fifteen dissertations concentrating on sauna’s health impacts have been published in Finland (Suomen Saunaseura ry). These dissertations have concluded that the predominant impact sauna has on the human body relates to blood circulation because the capacity of blood vessels is increased (Suomen Saunaseura ry). According to studies, sauna has a positive effect on sleep because taking a sauna helps falling asleep and enhances sleep quality, most probably due to an increase in body temperature, that in turn affects the level of serotonin and noradrenaline (Suomen

Saunaseura ry). Some psychoanalysts believe that the euphoria arising from a sauna bath emerges due to the sauna's warm and calm atmosphere that recalls childhood memories and resembles a mother's womb (Suomen Saunaseura ry).

4 Methodology

This chapter introduces research design, data collection methods and the means used in analysis and interpretation of the data. The methodological framework predominantly draws on the theory of marketplace mythologies, which was discussed more profoundly in the chapter on literature review. As a framework, marketplace mythologies provide a platform for discovering how Finnish consumers reproduce myths. This calls for qualitative research methods as well as an ethnographic approach. The theory is revised in this section in order to explain its employment as a basis for research design. The study is ethnographic by nature and uses semi-structured multigenerational interviews as the main data collection method. Historical and contemporary literature of the Finnish sauna culture was reviewed before and during the data collection and analysis, in order to more appropriately discover the key themes emerging from the collected data. Thus, the literature review contributes significantly to the interpretation of the data. Secondly the data is collected by engaging in discussion of the sauna in real-life settings. Lastly, various means of analyzing the data, such as categorization and comparison, are presented, followed by methods of interpreting the data.

4.1 Research Design

The study focuses on discovering myths related to the Finnish sauna culture and moreover, how Finnish consumers reproduce the myths by engaging in sauna rituals. The objective is also to find out how Finnish consumers experience and behave in relation to the myths in the context of everyday sauna activities. The primary research questions also presented in the introductory chapter are:

1. What kinds of myths are related to taking a sauna?
2. How do consumption rituals relating to taking a sauna demonstrate sauna mythology?
3. Is the notion of 'sacred' incorporated in sauna rituals? If so, how does the sacredness occur in those rituals?
4. How do consumers' experiences of nature relate to taking a sauna and are there any

contradictions in experiencing nature through sauna consumption?

5. How do consumers reproduce sauna myths?

Theories of marketplace mythologies provide a basis for research design and serve as a methodological framework. Marketplace cultures are societies co-created by its members, expressing shared practices and values (Arnould & Thompson 2005). According to Thompson (2004), marketplaces provide a context for mythologies, which interpret, employ and rework cultural meanings. Thompson (2004) suggests that consumer myths existing in marketplaces reflect ideals that are constantly reproduced in order to fit the conditions of contemporary life. In addition, contemporary narratives, also known as counter-memories, emerge from historical experiences and myths, and contribute to marketplace mythologies (Peñaloza 2000; Thompson 2004; Thompson & Tian 2008). Consumer myths have primarily been observed through structuralist tradition, which considers mythic archetypes and plotlines to be universal, and existing in order to cover the most profound and fundamental issues of humanity (Thompson 2004). From the critical-historical perspective, mythic archetypes and plotlines are considered as expressing cultural meanings and ideals and engendering national mythologies (Thompson 2004). Consequently Thompson (2004) suggests that universal archetypes provide a basis for myths, which convey profound concerns and aspirations of a consumer culture.

The methodological framework also employs the concept of juxtaposing the mythoi of Romanticism and Gnosticism introduced in theories of marketplace mythologies. Thompson (2004) suggests Romantic and Gnostic mythoi and metaphors indicate countervailing ideas, primarily of nature and technology. The two juxtaposing mythoi may coexist in marketplaces, in which new competing ideological ideals are produced and diverse articulations exist (Thompson 2004). The relationship between consumer agency and the marketplace is multi-dimensional since consumers are not merely considered as passive actors, but instead they articulate and reproduce marketplace mythologies (Thompson 2004). Counter-arguments emerging from ideological conflicts represent instability in a marketplace mythology, which as a result of these conflicts may be transformed (Thompson 2004). According to Thompson (2004), this paradoxical outcome of controversial articulations sustains and reworks marketplace mythology.

As a conclusion, the above-presented methodological framework requires ethnographic methods that assist in achieving profound understanding of the phenomenon. The objective of the data collection is to gain insight into the inherent values and beliefs held by the study participants, in the context of sauna culture. Instead of presenting direct questions an indirect approach is sometimes needed, since a consumer may not have a conscious understanding of the subject in question (Rook 1985). Although the innermost beliefs are difficult to disclose, appropriate methods of collecting and analyzing the data helps to reveal imbedded meanings as well as revealing how a participant experiences the surrounding world. Thus long, semi-structured and open-ended interviews as well as a search for metaphors instead of strict verbatim interpretation, were used in processing the data. In the next section, the chosen methods are presented more precisely.

4.2 Data Collection

According to McCracken (1988), the objective of qualitative fieldwork is to segregate and define cultural categories and assumptions emerging from the data and the literature review, then after that identify coherent patterns and interrelationship among the categories. The purpose of qualitative research is therefore not to seek generalizations, but instead to discover and understand the phenomena (McCracken 1988). Throughout the research process the historical context was kept in mind. According to Wyche, Sengers, & Grinter (2006), sensitivity to history deepens a researcher's understanding of the phenomena.

Data was collected through qualitative fieldwork, guided by McCracken's (1988) long interviewing method. As a primary data collection method, long, multigenerational and in-depth interviews were conducted in order to discover innermost beliefs and values and reveal how experiencing and reshaping sauna myths have transformed over time. McCracken (1988) suggests that long, qualitative interviews are appropriate when a more profound understanding of the silent assumptions, beliefs and experiences of those being studied, is required. As these innermost components of mind often operate unconsciously in every life they are not readily communicated, nor straightforwardly extracted from the collected data (McCracken 1988).

A researcher's acquaintance with the consumer culture, and prior understanding of the Finnish sauna culture, enables more profound interpretation and compilation of the data (McCracken 1988). According to McCracken (1988), a researcher can be used as an instrument in a qualitative research. As the researcher is a native Finn, her experiences of the phenomenon were used as a tool to identify and match categories and patterns emerging from the research process. However, McCracken (1988) remarks that a researcher's assumptions may impede building a deeper understanding of the phenomena as they occur. In order to reduce any disadvantageous effects of the researcher's perceptions, a distanced approach was employed by using techniques presented by McCracken (1988). Objective distance in the study was created by undertaking a thorough review of the literature, thus enabling the researcher to scatter prior assumptions. In addition, prior assumptions were sought to be discarded by employing a constructed questionnaire to guide the interviews, and utilizing imaginative reconstruction, by which respondents' statements, however peculiar, were considered as if they were true (McCracken 1988).

As a secondary data collection method, informal conversations over sauna culture in everyday life situations were initiated and engaged in. Compared with long interviews, these casual conversations differed in nature due to their authentic and liberated atmosphere since, according to Jorgensen (1989), consumers behave differently when they know they are being observed. The casual conversations were not generally recorded, in order to maintain a relaxing and natural ambiance. Instead field notes were written down immediately after the conversations. These field observations sought to reveal the realities and thoughts, from the perspective of the members of this specific consumer culture (Jorgensen 1989). Personal reflections on taking a sauna, in the special setting of three generations of family members, was also put in writing. In addition, a variety of saunas was visited and a short review on social media was made, in order to find out how sauna-related elements appear in individuals' social media accounts. In this brief netnographic review, predominantly Instagram pictures, with the most common hashtags were examined, in order to verify identified categories that emerged in the research process.

4.2.1 Interviewees

According to McCracken (1988), less is more in selecting interviewees and suggests that eight is often an adequate number of respondents. In the study, ten interviews were conducted, and nine of them were transcribed and used as part of the data set. McCracken (1988) remarks that the objective of choosing a group of respondents is not to provide a representation of a larger group, but instead to grasp the respondent's viewpoint, in order to understand the phenomenon. However, the objective was to seek as wide-ranging a group of respondents as was possible. The nine respondents selected consisted of five females and four males, all of whom were native Finns. Four respondents fell into the category of young adults, three respondents were middle-aged, one respondent was over sixty and one respondent was over eighty. All the young adults had lived their entire lives in urban areas. The other five older respondents had lived in a rural town when growing up, but only the 80-year-old respondent still lived in a rural town.

According to McCracken (1988), the relationship between an interviewer and a respondent is complex, requiring a balance between formality and informality. A certain informality in interviews was practiced in order to create a safe atmosphere and assure the respondent of confidentiality. Creating informality helped to reassure the respondent of the interviewer's sympathetic attitude towards his or her complex life (McCracken 1988). However, in order to facilitate the interviewer's role as an investigator, a certain degree of formality, as recommended by McCracken (1988,) was exercised. Especially in the Finnish culture people naturally guard their privacy, and hence, the fact that the interviewees were acquaintances of the researcher was a great advantage in getting comprehensive and profound data.

4.2.2 Interviews

Due to time scarcity and appropriate intimacy, interviews were held in various settings of interviewees' everyday lives. Seven interviews were held at interviewee's home, and two interviews were held in a coffee shop. Interviews, on average, lasted for 57 minutes. The shortest interview lasted for 42 minutes, whereas the longest interview was one hour and 38 minutes long. Interviews followed a predesigned questionnaire, which covered the same topics for each

interviewee. Interviews commenced with a set of simple biographical questions in order to create more relaxed atmosphere. Although the structure of the questionnaire remained rather unchangeable, the interviewees were encouraged to evoke narrative responses throughout the interview by presenting open-ended questions and prompting the interviewee to tell more about the key subjects as they emerged. In addition to verbal responses, other inklings, such as facial expressions, topic avoidances and laughter, were observed throughout the interviews. Guided by McCracken's (1988) research methods, the questionnaire was constructed based on the themes and central terms that emerged from the literature review in order to suppress the predominance of interviewer's own beliefs and assumptions.

Both the interviewer and the respondents were required to manufacture distance, which essentially meant considering familiar subjects in unfamiliar ways (McCracken 1988). As mentioned previously, the interviewer avoided the predominance of her assumptions by constructing the questionnaire based on topics that emerged from the literature review. In addition, the respondents were urged to manufacture distance and discard the self-evident assumptions by using a technique of planned prompting and "playing dumb" (McCracken 1988). According to McCracken (1988), planned prompts are particularly important if the studied phenomenon consists of self-explanatory elements. Hence, the respondents were asked well-designed and "dump" questions of those subjects that are generally taken for granted. Consequently, the respondents were requested to explain the self-explanatory matters as if they were utterly unfamiliar to the interviewer, and the received responses, also known as emergent propositions, were then treated as if they were entirely true. McCracken (1988) suggests that the results of a planned prompting procedure can often be regarded as actual accomplishments of an interview.

4.3 Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

Data analysis and interpretation followed the guiding principles presented by Spiggle (1994). The purpose of the analysis was to divide the complex data into manageable and consistent parts, by manipulating the data (Spiggle 1994). The study employed categorization, abstraction, comparison and dimensionalization as qualitative data analysis operations presented by Spiggle (1994). These manipulative tools equipped the researcher to dissect, organize and reconstruct the data, in order to

arrive at consistent explanations and conceptual meanings (Spiggle 1994). As all the interviews were recorded on tape, the first step before analyzing the data was to make a verbatim transcript of the interviews. Guided by analysis principles by McCracken (1988), each utterance in the transcripts was initially considered separate from other points of the text. Following Spiggle's (1994) the guidelines, the observations that emerged were then developed into primary categories, and further into subcategories, on the basis of testimonies and the literature review. Through categorization, the relevant elements of the data were identified, classified and coded into categories followed by abstraction, in which categories were assorted into more conceptual ones (Spiggle 1994).

After categorizing and abstracting the data, the patterns and interrelationships of the emerging themes were observed and only the most coherent formulations were selected (McCracken 1988; Spiggle 1994). In this section on the analyzing process, the role of a researcher as an instrument was essential in providing insight into the manipulated data (McCracken 1988). Guided by Spiggle's (1994) analysis method, comparison of the elements within the data was conducted throughout the manipulation process, in order to find similarities and dissimilarities. Here, the word processing program, Microsoft Word was used to search the transcripts for specific terms. Lastly, through dimensionalization, variations and their attributes were explored, in order to define interrelationships between categories and patterns, and elucidate conceptual meanings (Spiggle 1994).

During interpretation, abstract conceptualizations and patterns in meanings were explored (Spiggle 1994). According to Spiggle's (1994) techniques for interpreting the data, the researcher sought to grasp the essence of a phenomenon by identifying coherent themes. through which consumers construct their world and understanding how rituals, cultural codes and symbols reproduce cultural patterns. The Finnish sauna culture includes a vast repertoire of metaphors and thus metaphorical references were searched from the data. In addition, using metaphors as interpretive tools facilitated exploring interrelationship between themes and gaining an insight into the phenomenon (Spiggle 1994).

5 Findings

The main objective of the study was to identify the predominant sauna myths, and gain a better understanding of how those myths are employed and reproduced by Finnish consumers in the context of the sauna marketplace. Hence, the primary research questions of what kinds of myths are related to taking a sauna, and how the identified sauna myths are employed and reproduced, are answered in this chapter. In addition, research questions concerning how the sacred and the experiences of nature are incorporated in the sauna marketplace through marketplace mythology, are discussed. A strong nexus between sauna consumption and mythological beliefs was discovered, and moreover, the predominant sauna myths were identified. Additionally, the concept of consumers performing an active role in reforming marketplace mythologies was reinforced, since empirical evidence indicated that sauna myths are employed and reproduced by the consumers.

Through a profound analysis, four primary themes were derived from the empirical data. All four main themes concerning Finnish sauna mythology recurred throughout the interviews. With regard to how the main themes were perceived, I discovered essential similarities emerging from the accounts of the interviewees. However, some differences were observed, particularly regarding the rituals related to identified sauna myths. The main themes, or the identified sauna myths, consist of elements that are employed in connection with different sauna myths. Consequently, the four primary themes do not exclude one another, but instead overlap to a certain degree. Hence, some aspects and elements within the context of sauna mythology are discussed in more than one section of this chapter, however from different perspectives. For example, some rituals display and convey different sauna myths simultaneously and are thus explored in connection with several themes.

The most significant themes drawn from the data were the myth of Finnishness, the myth of the sacred, the myth of returning to nature and the myth of healing, which includes mental and physical healing. The myth of Finnishness was identified as being the most dominant myth, because the notion of the sauna being a Finnish cultural institution emerged from the data, and was

manifested throughout the interviews. The veneration of the sauna space, and the ritualistic patterns of behavior in the sauna reflect the myth of the sauna being a sacred place. Particularly in connection with summer cottages, the sauna was observed as representing the return to nature and primitivism, the latter one being a sub-category of the myth of nature. In addition, the observation of how the respondents emphasized the ultimate purity attained after the sauna contributed to the concept of 'returning to nature'. Hence, being a subordinate theme for the myth of returning to nature, the concepts of purity was thoroughly analyzed. Moreover, the mental and physical healing properties of the sauna were identified as the fourth central theme of the study. According to the accounts of the interviewees, the sauna was subconsciously understood to possess mental and physical healing properties. However, this myth was the least evident of the main themes, and it included more variance in how the myth was perceived. In addition to the central sauna myths, I noticed traces of how recurrent rituals convey sauna mythology and assist in the reproduction of sauna myths.

At the beginning of the interviews, the respondents were asked to briefly narrate their background, tell about their favorite leisure time activity, and contemplate the elements that primarily construct their identity at the moment. Even though the set of biographical questions was principally asked in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere in the interviewing situation, it also provided the study with valuable information on respondents' priorities, beliefs and preferences related to their everyday life. Hence, the answers to the warm-up questions assisted in analyzing and interpreting the themes emerging from the data. In particular, the warm-up questions contributed to gaining a deeper insight into Finnishness. When asked to tell about themselves in short, a few respondents mentioned, in the first sentence, that their roots are in the countryside. Hence, the fact that they grew up in the countryside seemed to be important to these respondents, who nowadays live in an urban area. Another fact, which was early on mentioned by some of the respondents was motherhood or fatherhood.

In general, respondents' favorite leisure time activities were related to sports, culture, music and the outdoors, the last of which included jogging, Nordic Walking, fishing, hunting and simply spending time outdoors. One of the respondents related that his favorite leisure time activities are hunting, fishing and walking outdoors by referring to them as the 'nature hobbies'. A warm-up

question of “Can you describe the kinds of things that make you who you are today?” provided a brief, yet valuable, glimpse into the self-comprehension of the respondents, and additionally conveyed central aspects of Finnishness, at least to some extent. The most common answers to the question were related to work, past experiences, dreams of the future, preferred things and loved ones. Surprisingly, nearly all the respondents referred to their occupation, instead of e.g. their role in the family, as a primary factor defining their identity. Consequently, the self-concept of the respondents was predominantly based on the ‘work identity’.

In this chapter, a rich account of the phenomenon is provided through an in-depth data analysis and interpretation. Accordingly, the aforementioned themes emerging from the data are explained in more detail. In order to demonstrate the main themes, excerpts of the interview data are used as illustrative quotes. Firstly, sauna as a marketplace for mythologies is discussed, along with Finnish sauna consumption and its typical characteristics. After this, the main themes are presented by discussing how the sauna myths identified are experienced, employed and reproduced by Finnish consumers. This chapter of the main themes consists of the myth of Finnishness, the myth of the sacred, the myth of the return to nature and the myth of physical and mental healing. The myth of Finnishness includes aspects of how the sauna contributes to the national identity, how Finnishness of the sauna is being passed on as a socio-cultural heritage, and how gendered roles and the sub-myth of the Finnish man are embedded in sauna consumption. A veneration of the sauna, taking a sauna as a means of celebrating the holidays, the mystical power of ‘*löyly*’ and boundary crossing are discussed from the perspective of the sacred. The myth of the return to nature consists of nature-relatedness and primitivism experienced through sauna consumption, and purifying rituals performed by sauna bathers. The myth of healing is discussed from the perspective of physical and mental healing properties associated with taking a sauna.

5.1 Sauna as a Marketplace for Mythologies

Based on the accounts of the interviewees, the Finnish sauna is traditionally a wood-heated sauna equipped with wooden benches, called ‘*lauteet*’ in Finnish. These wood-heated saunas are mostly related to primitive summer cottage life, whereas electric stove saunas predominate in the context of modern and urban life. Summer cottage saunas are more tightly linked with traditions, festive

rituals and the sacred than urban home saunas. On the other hand, urban home saunas are used infrequently and within a more mundane context. Despite the surroundings of the sauna experience or the type of sauna stove, sauna is understood to convey relaxation, pleasure, sacredness and Finnishness. Additionally, it is considered as providing healing, purification and a return to nature. Based on the data, the notion of 'löyly' was mentioned in all the informants' narratives, and moreover, considered to be the quintessential element of the sauna. 'Löyly', water vapor created from the sauna stove, was often associated with mystical beliefs and the sacredness of the sauna. Overall, the Finnish sauna and 'löyly' were described by the informants as follows:

What is sauna? Technically it is an isolated space with hot, hot stones, that are put in a kind of box to preserve the heat. And when you throw water on them, it releases warm air, and then people just sit in the warm room and relax. (No. 8, male)

[...] In the old times, it (sauna) was the only, or the best, place to have a wash. And it endowed Finns with cleanliness at the time, when there was no shower nor running water available. Hence, a special room was warmed and used for bathing. [...] (No. 3, female)

Well 'löyly' is a... 'löyly' is the warm and moist air, which is being released from the stove stones when you throw water on them. In other words, it's a warm puff. 'Löyly' can also be regarded as a wider concept, like, it can also refer to the whole sauna experience, it is 'löyly'. Let's take a 'löyly'. (No. 8, male)

The function of the sauna was summarized by a respondent as a vehicle for delivering “purification for soul and body, relaxation” (No. 6, female). Interviewees portrayed the function of the sauna as being a place to contemplate and ponder profound issues, alone or together with like-minded people. Another primary function of the sauna is to provide washing facilities at the summer cottage, as well as to deliver ultimate purity. The respondents were unable to compare the sauna to other places or activities, since nothing delivers the same feeling as the sauna. The sauna was understood to relax, pacify, and make a sauna bather feel slack and flabby, in a good way. Since the contemporary washing facilities in urban homes provide faster, and perhaps more effective way to cleanse, the sauna is primarily seen as a place for relaxation. In general, the respondents portrayed taking a sauna as a rite to be repeated in order to disengage from everyday

life with its stressful issues, instead of being used merely as a washing facility: “... *Since you can wash yourself faster and better in a shower, I nowadays consider the sauna more as a relaxation thing*” (No. 7, male). Additionally, the socializing aspect of taking a sauna was emphasized throughout the interviews, since the sauna was primarily taken with friends and family: “*Well yeah, isn’t sauna a place, where, if you take your loved ones with you, you can tell them everything? Yes, and you can get even the quietest fellow to talk!*” (No. 7, male).

5.1.1 Finnish Sauna Consumption

Although all Finns presumably take a sauna, there are different shades and variations in the sauna habits and sauna experiences based on, for example, age, gender, habitation, values and beliefs of an individual, occasion, season and company. One thing in common to all the accounts of the interviewees was that nobody liked to take public or condominium saunas. The respondents strongly preferred private home or summer cottage saunas. Surprisingly, even though some of the respondents had a home sauna of their own, none of the respondents used it regularly, and some even rarely. The same respondents, however, noted that they wouldn’t buy a house without a sauna. The central idea of having a home sauna was primarily based on wanting to have the possibility of taking a sauna at home whenever they wanted.

[...] When I bought this apartment, one criterion was that it should include a sauna. [...] I use it (the sauna) as a place to dry my laundry. But I don’t permanently store any stuff there. (No. 3, female)

It’s relatively seldom (taking a sauna), even though the sauna was one of the main reasons why we bought this house, because I fell in love with the sauna of this house. I said that the sauna is designed so magnificently that I can vision myself, and especially my sister, who takes a sauna at our place, taking a sauna there. And yet we use it too rarely. (No. 9, female)

According to the data, sauna was consumed a lot more often in summer than in winter. In summer, the respondents would take a sauna one to three times a week, on average, and sauna consumption is strongly related to the summer cottage environment. Urban home saunas appeared to be

discarded completely in the summer season. Overall, most respondents reckoned that they take a sauna one to three times a month: *“I take a sauna when I feel like it, and it’s quite rarely. It’s not that I don’t like the sauna but it is not part of my mundane everyday life and routines. I feel like I have too many other things to be done...”* (No. 3, female). Only a few respondents seemed to be eager to take a sauna repeatedly throughout the year, yet, in these cases, taking a sauna was often in connection with exercising, heavy work or the countryside environment. The most enthusiastic sauna bather out of the interviewees narrated how he would take a sauna one to five times a week: *“Perhaps five times per week. After the work and again after doing some sports. Sometimes even two times per day...”* (No. 6, male). Another sauna enthusiast regarded taking a sauna as a hobby: *“It’s my hobby. I love the sauna”* (No. 4, female).

What was particularly prominent in the data was that the sauna is predominantly taken on Saturdays. Some of the respondents related they would take a sauna every Saturday, or, at least, they used to in their childhood and youth. Regardless of their generation, all the respondents remembered how they would take a sauna on Saturdays as a child. Even though it seems that the tradition of taking a sauna every Saturday has faded from the urban way of living the data evidenced that, in the countryside, people still hold on to the concept of Saturday being ‘the sauna day’. In summer, particularly in the environment of a summer cottage, taking a sauna was discovered to be independent of the week day. The oldest respondent, already a senior citizen, was asked to describe how, or whether, the sauna was taken on Saturdays during the wartime, in the 40s. Her interview excerpt offers a portrayal of how strongly the sauna was embedded in people’s everyday life and weekly routines, despite the war.

Well yes, we did (take a sauna), it (the wartime) didn’t have an effect on it, since we took a sauna every single Saturday. [...] There were never bombing alerts then. You see, people usually took a sauna in the evening and there were rarely alerts in the evening. (No. 1, female)

Although taking a sauna is characterized by seasonal fluctuation, the preferred time of day to take a sauna turned out to be the same throughout the year. In general, the respondents emphasized taking a sauna as an evening activity, because taking a sauna ends the day: *“Nobody takes a sauna in the morning”* (No. 6, male). There was only one exception to the norm of what time of day the

sauna was taken, because at Christmas it was considered appropriate to take a sauna in the morning: *“At Christmas, you take a sauna in the morning, but not otherwise”* (No. 4, female). For the most part, sauna was reported as being consumed together with friends, family or other like-minded people, who conduct themselves according to the unwritten rules and norms of the sauna. The data suggests that the sauna conveys the feeling of togetherness, and provides an opportune context and atmosphere for socializing. Some even said they refrained from taking sauna alone: *“Well I have to have other people with me (in the sauna), because alone in the sauna... it’s weird. Or at least it would feel like that, weird”* (No. 5, male). Nevertheless, according to the interviewees, taking a sauna is sometimes preferred as an individual experience of being alone with one’s own thoughts.

Taking a sauna appeared to have a narrative pattern with beginning, middle and ending. Before entering the sauna, respondents said they would quickly rinse themselves of dirt. Some of the respondents hinted that you should sweat, or do something physically hard, before taking a sauna. People escape from the stressful everyday life in the sauna, which provides them with a relaxing sensation of the *‘löyly’*. After the sauna, sauna bathers try hard to maintain the peaceful and relaxed feeling. Respondents reported that they would normally put on loose and comfortable clothes, such as bathrobe and wool socks, in order to preserve the after-sauna feeling. Additionally, respondents narrated how they would pamper themselves after the sauna by having a “luxury moment”, putting on lotions and face-packs, watching television and eating something nice, which is traditionally ‘sauna sausage’. Since it was mentioned many times in the respondents’ narratives, sauna sausage appeared to be one of the central concepts and commodities related to the Finnish sauna. Traditionally, a sauna sausage is warmed up in a foil wrap on the sauna stove and eaten after the sauna. One respondent said she cannot eat the actual sauna sausage due to high cholesterol, but she has substituted the sauna sausage with light turkey wiener –type sausage, in order to preserve the ritual of eating a ‘sauna sausage’. According to the respondents, sauna sausage is an ordinary sausage, yet is called a ‘sauna sausage’ in connection with taking a sauna. As a matter of fact, the data revealed that many commodities, commonly used in connection with the sauna, were often given the prefix ‘sauna’. The prefix ‘sauna’ appeared to be used in order to distinguish the special usage of a commodity from the mundane context of its usage.

5.1.2 Socialization in the Sauna

The socializing aspect of the Finnish sauna emerged clearly from the data. The importance of company in the sauna was evident throughout the interviews, and some of the respondents said they wouldn't even consider taking a sauna alone. A respondent concluded her thoughts on how taking a sauna is entirely a social activity, in contrast to an individual experience: *"I have never taken a sauna alone, and I guess I never will"* (No. 2, female). The Finnish sauna was portrayed as an opportune place to have meaningful conversations with family members, most often between couples, fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters. Bonding, improving the relationships and asking for advice on perplexing matters, for example concerning growing up, appeared to be some of the main motivators to take a sauna in company.

*[...] We (my husband and I) talk a lot about our relationship, and things like that (in the sauna). In everyday life, we just talk about grocery shopping and schedules, and thus, it (sauna) is more like *sighs*, now we just breath and ponder [...]. I cannot escape. That's the thing! Because I'm so restless and always on-the-go. And when I sit in the corner, and my husband sits in front of me, I cannot escape, so I have to sit still. So, I'm kind of forced to ponder and talk. [...]* (No. 4, female)

It's a place to contemplate, it's a place where I have been able to ask about anything. Like, it's a place, where me and my mum could sit still together for once. So, it has been developed into a place for mutual conversations, where we have talked about things that cannot be talked about elsewhere. (No. 4, female)

Yes, conversations, and I mean, I often take a sauna with my sister here in the city and we talk, and talk, and talk about work things, and we might trash stupid people and praise the good people and we put the world in order [...] (No. 9, female)

The social benefit of taking a sauna is based on the concept of how the sauna makes people talk to each other. In an informal conversation, a young woman told she takes a weekly 'lenkkisauna' (sauna after a run) with her neighbors. She said that in the 'lenkkisauna', she would talk to the neighbors, even though she otherwise doesn't really talk to them. She felt that sauna provides an opportune environment for people, who are otherwise strangers to each other, to initiate a

conversation without being regarded as weird. In general, the respondents attributed the socializing power of the sauna to its characteristic of being detached from the hectic and technology-filled everyday life. In contemporary Finnish society, the way of living is hectic and full of activities, and thus the sauna is regarded as an exclusive environment free of rush, technology and interruptions. The following interview excerpts characterize the level of profundity acquired in the ‘sauna conversations’, and offer an example of the state of mind that people have in the sauna.

[...] *It's a place, where you can drink beer, and everybody has an open state of mind, so that you can ask or tell personal things. [...]* (No. 7, male)

[...] *It was that one time (imprinted in his mind) when I took a sauna with my taata (grandad) for the last time, and he knew he had cancer. And I saw the bruises and he told he had been stung with needles, and that's why he looked like that. We both knew that things were not good, and that this could be the last time for us to be together in the sauna. And it was. Actually, it was probably the last time I saw taata alive.* (No. 8, male)

[...] *I wouldn't tell everyone about my personal stuff. But I have a mentor at my workplace, he's the one who has taught me things. And we have become friends, close friends. So, if we are in the sauna only the two of us, we talk and sometimes we talk about profound matters.* (No. 6, male)

Many respondents emphasized the sauna playing a central role in creating the feeling of togetherness and cohesion among a sports team or other groups of people engaged in a sports hobby, such as hunting and fishing. Taking a sauna was remarked to be applied as a means of celebrating winnings and familiarizing new team members with the team: “*If you were a new player in the team and your team had a sauna evening, at least those were the occasions when you've got to know new people. And that is the reason why people arrange sauna evenings, to reinforce the fellowship. Oh yes, it belongs to hockey, hockey teams have many sauna evenings during the season. (...) Of course, if we have won a game or something like that, so in that case, we have celebrated (by taking a sauna), it only makes the celebration and achievements more spectacular*” (No. 6, male).

Men, in particular, have ‘lad’s sauna evenings’ that consist of consuming alcohol, sometimes even to a great extent. Especially pre-Christmas parties were related as consisting of taking a sauna together with consuming alcohol. In the ‘lad’s sauna evenings’ taking a sauna may last for hours and there might be many cooling-off breaks and beer-drinking moments related to it: “...*beer is an essential part of the sauna evenings with lads*” (No. 8, male). The accounts of the interviewees conveyed a perspective of how consuming alcohol in the sauna is appropriate in connection with socializing: “*Yes, if I’m alone I don’t drink. But if I’m with my friends I might have one beer*” (No. 6, male). Consequently, in the context of taking a sauna alone, alcohol consumption was observed to be modest, non-existent or even considered inappropriate.

[...] *In the sauna, only a can, I mean no more than a can. [...] However, if I’m alone in my urban home sauna, I wouldn’t tipple cider in the laundry room. Accordingly, it (drinking alcohol) is truly related to socializing.* (No. 3, female)

*Well yes, it’s related to sauna evenings (drinking alcohol). But not if I’m taking a sauna alone, because then there is a risk that I would just die there *laughs*.* (No. 4, female)

5.2 Finnishness

At the beginning of the interviews, the respondents were asked to describe Finnishness, which was identified as a central myth in the context of sauna consumption. In general, the respondents strongly considered themselves as Finns, and thus being a Finn was a vital part of their identity, as well as something to be proud of. The cultural meanings of nature, ‘sisu’, silence and equality emerged strongly from the accounts of the interviewees in conjunction with various sauna myths. Hence, these concepts were found to be central elements of Finnishness, in particular. For example, being silent, in certain situations, is considered a Finnish virtue: “...*I think it’s a good thing to be able to be quite among others, and it doesn’t bother anyone*” (No. 6, male). In addition, it was also discovered that the Finnish sauna conveyed the above-mentioned cultural meanings and values in the form of myths. In the following sections, the cultural meanings of nature, equality and silence are also observed in connection with different sauna myths. The following interview excerpts offer a portrayal of how Finnishness is perceived by the Finns.

Finnishness...northern people and land, with extraordinary, exclusive language, expressive and elegant language. And nature, pure nature. Thousands of lakes. Four seasons. This is the home, homeland, home and the way of being and living, it's an entity comprised of culture and so on [...]
(No. 9, female)

Finnishness is honesty of some kind. Saying things that we really mean, and being honest and trying to be good people, like towards everybody. And maybe also 'sisu' (resilience), and, of course, some kind of obstinacy and perseverance. Those are parts of Finnishness, in some way. And maybe the silence in appropriate places. (No. 8, male)

Based on the data and literature review, feeling equal to others is truly important for a Finn. The sauna, in particular, expresses the cultural meaning and value of equality, which is manifested in the way in which others sauna bathers' opinions and bodies are treated with the utmost respect. For example, all the respondents said that you are not allowed to throw water onto the sauna stove without considering others, thus it is polite to ask before throwing. And if somebody asks to stop throwing water, this request must be obeyed. In an informal discussion over the sauna, a young man narrated that democracy predominates in the Finnish sauna, since it is an unwritten rule that everybody's opinions and preferences are equally respected.

In another informal conversation over taking a sauna, a middle-aged man, working as a key account manager, said that the Finnish sauna is the nest of equality, where one can truly be himself or herself. He also said that the sauna is considered as unbiased ground, where a man not only divests himself of his clothes, but also of possible prejudices and reserves. In addition, he noted that people are their most genuine in the sauna, because being naked allows the personality and opinions to come into the open. According to the man, sauna is definitely not a place to stare at people's naked bodies, since all that matters, is from the neck up. To conclude with, he remarked that anything below the neck is irrelevant, which makes the Finnish sauna the nest of equality.

Based on the data, the notion of 'sisu' was oftentimes mention in connection with Finnishness, and thought of as a predominant part of the Finnish mentality. Hence, the notion of 'sisu' in connection with taking a sauna was observed throughout the data collection and analysis process. Overall, the

notion of *'sisu'* emerged most evidently in the warm-up section of the interviews, in connection with the way of living and thinking: "... *I would say I'm somewhat persistent, but it has been useful, since even though I've felt depressed due to being unemployed, then it ('sisu') makes you keep on going*" (No. 3, female). In the interview, the respondents were asked straight-forwardly whether they link the notion of *'sisu'* with taking a sauna. The answer was unambiguously negative: "*Maybe both of them reflect Finnishness, but no, there's only Finnishness but nothing else there*" (No. 2, female). However, some of the respondents reckoned that *'sisu'* is instead related to activities performed before taking a sauna: "... *I think it's probably more related to the thing performed before the sauna, like you've done something with vigor, rage and 'sisu'. Like you have struggled with something, and after that, you throw yourself to the sauna...*" (No. 6, male).

Despite the fact that the interviewees didn't associate the notion of *'sisu'* with the sauna, I noticed that *'sisu'*, one of the most predominant cultural meanings in Finnish society, emerged from the data. In general, the notion of *'sisu'* was conveyed through the accounts of the interviewees as they described their behavior in the sauna: "...*It seems that I'm the toughest sauna bather because I'm nearly always the last one in the sauna...*" (No. 7, male). The concept of *'sisu'* was most evident in the accounts of the respondents concerning seating order in the sauna. Many respondents narrated how they always sit on the upper bench due to the reasons related to *'sisu'*: "*I'm a tough guy, I can manage the upper bench*" (No. 2, female). Another respondent suggested the same: "*Tough guys sit up and not-so-tough guys sit lower*" (No. 4, female). Since it appeared to be a standard of behavior and an unspoken rule to sit on the upper bench, some of the respondents were observed to be preserving the notion of *'sisu'*, embedded in sauna consumption, by deprecating deviation from the norm. The following interview excerpt offers an example of how sitting on the lower bench is perceived: "...*If it was some of my acquaintances, I would ask him or her 'what the hell are you doing there' (sitting on the lower bench), because none of the people I know would sit on the lower bench*" (No. 8, male).

A respondent told an interesting and descriptive narrative, which evidently demonstrates how taking a Finnish sauna properly is connected with the notion of *'sisu'*. Hence, the notion of *'sisu'*, being an element of the myth of Finnishness, is bolstered by acting in a certain way in the sauna, as well as openly disliking the behavior that undermines the myth. The interview excerpt of an

elderly respondent reveals how the heat of the sauna should be endured in order to be a proper sauna bather.

The house, from where we bought the piece of land (for a summer cottage), had an old landlady and a new landlady. And the old landlady mocked her daughter-in-law claiming that she was a weak and insignificant person, who couldn't even take a proper 'löyly'. So, she said it would be nice to have someone to take a proper 'löyly' with. [...] Once we invited her to take a sauna at our place. [...] Since she had constantly bragged about being a proper 'sauna person', I took a big scoop of water and threw it onto the sauna stove. And she whined "ouch, ouch, ouch! Give me the scoop madam!" [...] And I just thought, why did she lie to me about being a true sauna bather!" (No. 1, female)

In this section, the myth of Finnishness in connection with taking a sauna is discussed in more detail. Firstly, the sauna being a token of Finnishness and part of the national identity is viewed. Secondly the Finnish sauna is observed from the perspective of cultural heritage that is passed on from generation to generation. Lastly, the myth of the Finnish man is discussed by reviewing the gendered structure and gendered roles within the context of sauna consumption.

5.2.1 Sauna – Part of the National Identity

An interviewee reckoned that all cultures have some sort of bathing culture, and the sauna is a Finnish form of it: "...On the other hand, there's like a Turkish sauna, so I reckon every culture has had a need for spa activities, it is just our form of it" (No. 9, female). The study submits strong evidence of how taking a sauna is considered to epitomize Finnishness, thus sauna consumption was observed as conveying the myth of Finnishness. When asked to describe the sauna, respondents immediately referred to Finnishness: "It's a place for relaxation. It's part of us Finns, it's Finnishness, it's folklore one could say. It is Finland..." (No. 6, male). Based on the accounts of the interviewees, taking a sauna is thought of as an odd habit that makes one feel like a true Finn. Taking a sauna was also described as a Finnish way to relax and be with each other. Additionally, taking a sauna was understood as an old-established tradition of Finnish culture: "The sauna is a Finnish, very very old, tradition..." (No. 3, female). Respondents also emphasized

that taking a sauna is something that comes naturally to a Finn, but reckoned that sauna doesn't have the same effect on foreigners as it has on Finns:

[...] If I was a Thai, I wouldn't take a sauna, because they don't have sauna culture there, and so, it is an imperative part of Finnishness. Because we live here, we also take a sauna. [...] It's a unique and wonderful thing that should be held on to, and the existence and tradition of the sauna should be preserved. And it's always a good idea to take a sauna. (No. 8, male)

I think for him or her (a foreigner), it wouldn't feel good at all, if he or she has never been to one (sauna). But then he or she could sit on the lower sauna bench, and slowly get used to it. And maybe someday it might feel good. (No. 3, female)

The respondents explained their sauna behavior through Finnishness, to a great extent, and Finnish cultural history was suggested as rationalizing the Finns' urge to take a sauna. A respondent pondered that liking sauna is common to us all: "...everybody likes the sauna once they figure it out" (No. 7, male). According to most of the respondents, being a Finn doesn't oblige a person to like taking a sauna. However, the accounts of the interviewees suggested that Finns might subconsciously find it strange, abnormal, and even objectionable, if a Finn is not fond of taking a sauna. Enjoying the sauna is considered as an essential element of Finnishness that contributes to the stereotype of a Finn. The Finnishness of the sauna was advocated and reproduced by considering it strange or putting pressure on those Finns, who don't enjoy taking a sauna, particularly in connection with social events:

[...] It's a shame if a Finn doesn't like it (taking a sauna) because in some way, it causes a stereotype to break down. It is not logical. [...] If somebody says he or she doesn't like the sauna, and if the reason is just 'not liking', it bothers me. Of course, somebody might have a good reason for not taking a sauna, but if someone says, 'I don't like sauna', it somehow makes me wonder what's wrong with this person. (No. 9, female)

Everybody can choose what they do. But of course, I would wonder what kind of man he is not wanting to come to sauna. But if it's not your cup of tea then it's not your cup of tea. [...] All Finns have taken a sauna at some point of their life. (No. 6, male)

A reinforcement and reproduction of the myth of Finnishness appeared in an informal conversation over taking a sauna. In the conversation, a key account manager of an importing company narrated that whenever he makes a business trip outside Finland, in order to meet suppliers and other stakeholders, he feels privileged to be able to promote the sauna as a Finnish invention. Additionally, he proudly stated that he has actively tried to spread the sauna culture wherever he goes. As mentioned in the literature review, the sauna was not invented by the Finns, but instead adopted by Finnish culture and transformed into a symbol of Finnishness. Despite this, the perception of the sauna being a Finnish invention was evident in the accounts of the respondents. The respondents extolled the sauna as a Finnish invention, that could be promoted in other countries: *“Sauna is Finnishness that can be exported to the world. And it has already been...”* (No. 6, male).

According to the study, since the nexus between the sauna and Finnishness is extremely strong in the minds of Finns, incorporating elements of other cultures into the sauna experience was considered inappropriate. An account by the oldest respondent offered an insight on the matter. In her youth, she used to take a wood-heated sauna, which she perceived to be purely Finnish. Consequently, when electric stove saunas emerged in Finland, she was highly against them, because she considered electric stoves as ‘non-Finnish’, besides considering them as the antithesis of nature-relatedness. She presumed that an electric stove sauna wouldn’t provide an appropriate *‘löyly’*, since it was just a ‘Chinese thing’: *“...you know, it was a kind of a Chinese thing, so I said that I DON’T want an electric sauna”* (No. 1, female).

Surprisingly, despite the Finnishness of the sauna being extolled by the respondents, most of them said they wouldn’t be upset, if they were not able to take a sauna from this day forward. According to the interviewees, not being able to take a sauna wouldn’t affect their everyday life. However, they reckoned that lacking a sauna experience in connection with ‘sauna holidays’, such as Midsummer and Christmas, would make them unhappy: *“At Christmas time, I would feel weird, of course, because you always take a sauna on Christmas Eve, so it would make me upset. It’s like, I would be nonplussed and then very upset. And in Midsummer, the feeling would be ten times, or fifty times, worse because then it would be concretized like, that I truly have to be able to take a sauna by the sea or by the lake at Midsummer, and an urban sauna at Christmas”* (No. 3, female).

5.2.2 Sauna as a Finnish Heritage

According to the interviewees, taking a sauna was a commonplace and mundane activity in their childhood. Taking a sauna as a child was so closely linked with everyday life, that the respondents were unable to recall anything extraordinary related to sauna. In addition, the respondents couldn't recall their first sauna experience, because they have been taking a sauna since they were very small. According to the respondents, taking a sauna was something they didn't question in their childhood, and it was regulated by their parents: *"...In the past, it was regulated by the parents, it's not like they would have asked me if I wanted to take a sauna or not, you just took a sauna to have a wash. It was something considered as self-evident"* (No. 7, male). All the respondents said they wouldn't force their child to take a sauna with them, but nevertheless, some of the respondents said that children should get used to taking a sauna. Based on the data, only one respondent recalled negative childhood memories relating to sauna. Her interview excerpt implies that she considered herself too small to be seated in the hot sauna for a long period of time:

[...] Regardless of the fact that I was the smallest one in our family, I was washed on the upper sauna bench even though I moaned. I was traumatized by it. Like, after being forced to sit still in a harsh 'löyly', why would they (parents) in addition wash me, the smallest child, on the upper bench? And I wasn't allowed to open the window, since my father and mother thought it wasn't too hot. (No. 3, female)

The study submits strong evidence of how sauna is considered as an essential part of the Finnish culture, and thus taking a sauna is passed on as their socio-cultural heritage. According to the interviewees, it is difficult to identify the traditions and rules taught by the parents, since taking a sauna is *"a part of one's behavior"* (No. 8, male). Because taking a sauna is so firmly embedded in the Finnish culture, the respondents opined that there is no need to actually teach them how to take a sauna: *"You just take them (children) with you to the sauna, and they have to live the sauna life similarly, in the same way"* (No. 7, male). In the accounts of the interviewees, it was emphasized that taking a sauna comes naturally to Finns, because it is an inherent characteristic of a Finn.

I liked it, even before I learned how to walk, I had climbed up the sauna benches [...] (No. 4, female)

[...] My mum was an extremely tough sauna person, yes, she was. And since I always sat next to her, I got used to it (taking a sauna). [...] (No. 1, female)

Maybe it is in the breast milk. It is so rooted in our culture that, you know, in the past, life started in the sauna. Hence, I guess it is just rooted in our culture and customs. So that's why. It belongs to Finland. It is kind of, it is Finland. [...] It's not something to be taught, it's natural. Just by doing. (No. 6, male)

[...] I guess it's a heritage that is passed on and lives on, because parents teach it to their children by taking them to the sauna, and then the children hopefully realize how pleasant it is. And so, the heritage continues to be passed on." (No. 3, female)

Although the respondents reckoned that taking a sauna is not something to be taught, some 'sauna rules' were discovered to be taught by the parents. One 'sauna rule' that frequently emerged from the data, was to have a wash before entering the sauna: "...*You must wash yourself before entering the sauna, but I guess this is something that is imprinted in everyone's head. So that is something they (parents) have taught of course...*" (No. 8, male). According to the respondents, their parents also warned them of the hot sauna stove, and instructed them not to make loud noises, fart or fool around in the sauna. I also discovered that sayings are used as vehicles to pass on 'sauna rules': "...*When I was a child, I was warned about the hot water like crazy. I recall a saying that was said by my mum many times, and it was related to taking water from the sauna pot 'hullu kuuman ensin laittaa'* (only a fool puts the hot water first). *Meaning that you have to take cold water first (when mixing water in a washing bowl, for washing oneself)*" (No. 9, female).

5.2.3 Myth of the Finnish man

Some sauna-related chores, particularly in the context of the summer cottage, were discovered to be performed based on gender-based roles. Those sauna chores that require physical labor, or that are otherwise traditionally considered as 'manly chores', were observed as being performed by

men – even today. Finnish women are predominantly considered as equal to Finnish men, and overall, gender equality prevails in Finnish society. Surprisingly, however, the myth of the Finnish man, which manifests the masculinity of men and portrays men as enablers of taking a sauna, emerged from the data. Male dominance over women was apparent within the context of sauna chores and roles related to the sauna. Even though there was no sign of female respondents being incapable of, for example lighting up a fire in a sauna stove or hacking firewood, female respondents seemed to leave those chores to men without questioning. Hence, the boundary between female and male roles is not as vague in the context of taking a sauna as it is within other areas of society. Consequently, the Finnish sauna culture is still eminently gendered, to some extent. Moreover, the myth of the Finnish man, conveying an old-established belief of gendered roles, was not recognized by the respondents – at least not by the female respondents.

When asked why the physical, or fire-related, chores were not performed by the them, the female respondents were unable to recognize the reasons behind their actions of lack of them. Some of the female respondents openly admitted that they have not been aware of the gendered structure prevailing in the context of the sauna. Only one respondent contemplated the gendered roles of sauna culture further. She narrated her perception of the gendered roles as follows: “...*It has just automatically been formed like that, it is somehow rooted in our mind. I don’t know, maybe in general, all the Finns are indoctrinated with the belief of those (e.g. warming the sauna) being a man’s job. It hasn’t been like proclaimed. We haven’t had a dialog like ‘I’m warming the sauna because I’m a man and I’m chopping the firewood because I’m a man’, or the other way round*” (No. 3, female).

The myth of the Finnish man conveys a heroic story of a wood hacking, rough, self-reliant and manly man, who is able to survive in the woods and in extreme temperatures. The myth of the Finnish man reflects the idealized picture of masculinity, and presents Finnish men as heroic characters, who ‘come from the backwoods’. Based on the study, the myth of the Finnish man is projected in terms of endurance, since men were expected to endure ‘löyly’ better than women. Most female respondents said that even though they always prefer the upper sauna bench, they have no problem sitting on the lower bench: “...*If it’s getting too hot in the sauna ‘löyly, then I move to the lower bench to wait until my boyfriend has had enough ‘löyly’*” (No. 3, female). On

the other hand, in general, men are expected to endure high-temperature 'löyly', and are not allowed to show their 'weakness' by sitting lower in the sauna: *"No, not in the lad's sauna evenings (to sit on a lower bench), it's quite obvious. Children may do so. And maybe some women. Men never do that. I don't know a single man who would do so"* (No. 7, male).

According to the male respondents, warming up a wood-heated sauna is a preferred and enjoyable chore: *"...Personally, I like to warm up a wood-heated sauna, I think it's fun. And, of course, carry water, for example, if I'm at the summer cottage, that chore is like a good thing. I like to carry water from the lake to the sauna, and then lay a fire in the sauna stove and prepare it all"* (No. 8, male). Based on the data, it became evident that from the male perspective, the 'manly chores' relating to the sauna are not only preferred, but also, for the most part, expected to be performed by men. Generally, men seemed to be territorial about 'their chores', to some extent, and often underestimate women's ability to perform the 'manly chores'. The following interview excerpts portray how gendered roles are perceived in the context of taking a sauna.

[...] *At least she (girlfriend) hasn't ever (warmed the sauna), no, I don't even know whether she would be able to light a fire. But I've taken the role, I also like it. [...] Actually, I haven't seen a woman that could hold an axe. No, no I haven't ever met one. [...] I haven't even tried to teach them (daughters to chop firewood), because in my opinion, there's a boundary. It is all right to have man's and woman's work.* (No. 7, male)

[...] *Once, when father-Voitto was away, I cannot even remember where he was, but anyway, I said here at home that "I'm going to warm the sauna since your father hasn't come home yet, I'm going to warm it". And my son, who was small then, said "Ladies don't warm sauna!" [...] Well I said to him that "now you'll see that ladies can also warm the sauna". And I tried, but couldn't find the matchsticks! I didn't know where they were. And then my son said "No, ladies don't warm the sauna".* (No. 1, female)

The female respondents share the same perception on the roles of performing sauna-related chores. Based on their accounts, it was usually the father, husband or son in the family, who was responsible for warming the sauna and chopping firewood. Nevertheless, the female respondents

remarked that they take part in the warming up process of the sauna by carrying the firewood to the sauna: *“If that (chopping firewood) isn’t a man’s job that I don’t know what is! Working with an axe. But I’m the one who carries them (the firewood) from the woodshed to the sauna, that’s like my job...”* (No. 4, female). Another female respondent also narrated how she may sometimes assist in maintaining the fire once lit, by adding pieces of firewood: *“Apparently, it’s a man’s job to warm up the sauna. (...) I mean, I can throw in a piece of firewood, but I think I have never taken the main responsibility of watching the fire, somebody has just asked me to add some more wood”* (No. 2, female).

5.3 The Sacred

This section presents how the notion of the sacred is incorporated in sauna consumption through mythology. A veneration of the sauna space, ritualistic patterns of behavior and celebration of holidays in connection with taking a sauna reflect the myth of the sacred in the context of the Finnish sauna. In this section, the mystical and sacred power of *‘löyly’* is also discussed. In general, the respondents portrayed the sauna as a place of tranquility and sacredness, where sauna bathers are not allowed to fool around, make loud noises or act disrespectfully. A respondent narrated how she was taught by her mother that the sauna should be taken at least once a week, and that behind this tradition is an ancient belief of washing one’s sins out in the sauna. Another respondent referred to taking a sauna as being similar to sitting in a church, which is an ultimate symbol of a sacred space, when he described taking a sauna: *“Sometimes it is like sitting in a church, especially at the beginning of a week. Towards the end of a week we start chatting more. (...) But it’s not like a church though...”* (No. 6, male). Another respondent used the word ‘sacred’ when being asked to describe the sauna itself: *“It’s a place where mothers have given birth, so it is truly a pure place, and even sacred in some way. It’s like a special place”* (No. 8, male).

5.3.1 Veneration of the Sauna

Based on the data, the notion of the sacred is attached to the sauna, and thus the sauna is venerated by Finnish consumers. The unwritten rules and norms concerning taking a sauna are obeyed and communicated forward in order to preserve the sacredness of the sauna and separate the sauna

from the mundane and secular world. The rule of not eating in the sauna was one of the most evident rules conveying the myth of the sacred. None of the respondents had ever seen or heard of someone eating in the sauna, even though sauna sausages are baked on top of the sauna stove. Some of the respondents wondered whether the rule of ‘no eating in the sauna’ is an actual rule, or just an inherent code of conduct. This kind of reasoning, concerning the existence of ‘actual’ sauna rules, implies that sauna norms are strongly embedded in the minds of Finns. Obeying sauna rules ritualistically and rigorously reinforces the sacredness of the sauna. All the respondents shared the same understanding of how eating is strictly prohibited in the sauna: *“No, not in any circumstances! Yuck! It’s a disgusting thought. First of all, it will smear the sauna. Or actually I don’t know what’s first, but second if you take, for example, a sandwich to the sauna, it will turn into a waterlogged and mushy lump. You cannot eat something like that. Theoretically you could eat a sausage but ...”* (No. 3, female)

Opinions on whether drinking in the sauna is allowed differed among the interviewees. Some of the respondents considered drinking in the sauna as being as prohibited as eating in the sauna, whereas some said that drinking in the sauna is allowed. Most respondents thought that a sauna bather is allowed to drink in the sauna, but nevertheless, it was often remarked that drinking in the sauna is restricted to a beer or a cider. Consequently, being drunk in the sauna was seen as being objectionable and violating the sacred essence of the sauna. Since the sauna rules concerning eating and drinking are regarded unquestionable and immutable, some of the interview questions prompted respondents to question their perceptions of the sauna rules. A few respondents thought that sauna rules regarding eating and drinking are self-evident and similar for all Finns: *“Not me, I never drink in the sauna. Actually, this makes me perceive that like...but I have always thought that these (sauna rules) are manners that are common to all of us, but perhaps it isn’t so. Somebody may drink (in the sauna) ... some guys drink beer in the sauna but I never drink beer in the sauna”* (No. 7, male).

Based on the accounts of the interviewees, the sauna is a space, which should be treated with veneration by acting in a calm manner. Sitting still and quietly in the sauna was even compared with sitting in a church, which is a common symbol of sacredness. Consequently, obeying the rule of silence and calm was observed as conveying the myth of the sacred, and once again, this rule

was considered incontrovertible and common to all: “...Everybody knows how to behave in the sauna, nobody would shout there...” (No. 4, female). According to the interviewees, there are no restrictions on topics discussed in the sauna. However, arguing or raising one’s voice was considered unsuitable to the essence of the sauna: “... you can talk and chat there, however in a calm way. In a way, it is like, one should be with his or her own thoughts and in peace” (No. 7, male). Hence, making loud noises and acting disrespectfully towards the sauna space is condemned, which, for its part, contributes to the belief in the sauna being a sacred space.

Even though the everyday lives of the Finns are surrounded by technology, the respondents were strongly against incorporating elements of modern technology into the sauna experience. The respondents were straightforwardly asked whether it is forbidden or undesirable to watch television or listen to music in the sauna. Surprisingly, even a respondent, who was truly enthusiastic about music, wouldn’t bring any music listening devices, albeit waterproof and heatproof, into the sauna: “Music doesn’t belong to sauna. (...) No, no. To sum it up, you could say that, as I think many would sum it up as follows, that sauna is a rather sacred place” (No. 5, male). An account from another respondent offered a similar view of the situation: “...I think it is totally forbidden (having radio or television in the sauna). I mean, others may do as they wish, but not with me...” (No. 3, female). According to the above-mentioned interview excerpts, the sacredness attached to the sauna is evidently conveyed through patterns of behavior. Finnish consumers constantly reflect the changes of the modern world in their sauna consumption, and by refusing to incorporate novel technological devices and home entertainment devices into the sauna experience, they preserve and further reproduce the myth of the sacred.

5.3.2 Holiday Celebrations

For the most part, the sacredness of the sauna emerged in the accounts of the respondents in connection with Sabbath or holiday celebrations. Particularly in the past, the Sabbath was commenced by taking a sauna, and followed by specialties, such as luxurious supper dishes and activities that deviated from the mundane. Based on the data, despite the fact that taking a sauna is still primarily related to Saturdays, the purpose of the sauna as a vehicle to start the Sabbath is negligible in contemporary life. Hence, this part of the myth of the sacred has evidently

disappeared. The two following interview excerpts suggest and portray the act of taking a sauna as a token of incipient Sabbath. Both of the excerpts refer to a period of time far in the past.

[...] *All the other suppers were eaten in the kitchen, but on Saturdays after the sauna, we ate here (in the living room). [...] It was thought to be something special and better. (No. 1, female)*

It was, of course, a kind of habit to start the Sabbath, since on Saturdays we would have specific tasks to be carried out. We would clean the henhouse. [...] But after that, you really looked forward to taking a sauna in order to get rid of that henhouse smell. [...] Then somebody asked 'would you warm the sauna', which gave us the feeling of 'soon this drudgery will end!', because there was always a lot of work. [...] And so, the Sabbath began. And I recall a childhood memory related to that. Sometimes after the sauna, we had like good food. For example, chicken, stewed in a baking oven that we ate. It was unusual to have broiler, chicken, at the end of the 70s, or in the beginning of the 80s, to have something delicious for food. (No. 9, female)

All the respondents emphasized that the sauna is a central, or even a compulsory, part of the Christmas and Midsummer celebrations. Additionally, some considered that taking a sauna is above all related to the calendar holidays. Based on the data, Christmas, Midsummer, and sometimes Easter as well, are regarded as the 'sauna holidays', which as a notion contributes to the belief of the sauna being a sacred place, at least to some extent. According to the accounts of the interviewees, taking a sauna at Christmas or in Midsummer is a yearly ritual that a Finn wants to repeat and preserve throughout his or her life. Additionally, the ritualistic way of consuming the sauna in connection with holidays, for example by prolonging the activity of taking a sauna and using special sauna elements, such as birch whisks, conveys the myth of the sacred. Hence, by engaging themselves in yearly repeated rituals, the Finns contribute to the reproduction process of the myth of the sacred. The following interview excerpt portrays the linkage between the sauna and the holidays.

For us, it is Midsummer and Christmas. Those are the primary ones. I cannot recall a Midsummer when we didn't take a sauna. [...] It (the sauna) is heated from dusk till dawn, yes, you would take a sauna repeatedly. Well not all the time all day long, but you'll start taking a sauna in the

morning and then you carry on. It is kept heated throughout the day. But I don't mean that you would sit in the sauna the whole day, you can spend some time outside as well and so. (No.6, male)

Referring to a respondent, using a birch whisk in the sauna “... *has always been a symbol of celebration...*” (No. 4, female). Accordingly, using a birch whisk, which is a special and even, to some extent, sacralized element, was considered as an antithesis to the mundane sauna consumption. Hence, slapping with a birch whisk was related to holidays, yet again, predominantly Midsummer and Christmas. Based on the interview data, incorporating birch whisks into the sauna experience transforms taking a sauna into a more ceremonial occasion, and raises the sauna experience to the ‘next level’, according to a respondent. The concept of a birch whisk as a special and sacralizing feature of sauna consumption, is illustrated through the following interview excerpt: “*Yes, it is more of a special thing. I mean, you don't use it in a sauna evening with the guys, nor just for fun, but instead, it is more of a special thing. If you have a birch whisk, then it's... then you are... it conveys more power and sensation in some way*” (No. 8, male).

5.3.3 Mystical Power of ‘Löyly’

Based on the study, one of the most central concepts related to the Finnish sauna is ‘löyly’, which was described by the interviewees as ‘a warm breath coming out of the stove’. Practically speaking ‘löyly’ is understood as water vapor, that is created by throwing water on to the heated sauna stones. Based on the accounts of the respondents, the notion of ‘löyly’ also bears a magical and mystical sense: it is the spirit of the sauna that breaks away from the sauna stove. When asked directly, all the respondents were familiar with the term ‘löylyn henki’ (the spirit of the ‘löyly’), but they had vague definitions of the concept in its entirety. The term ‘löylyn henki’ was referred to as a ‘mystical word’ and a ‘mysterious character’. Based on the narratives of the interviewees, the mystical notion of ‘löylyn henki’ is embedded in the term ‘löyly’ itself, when talking about the sensations provided by different saunas. It was reckoned by some of the interviewees that if the water vapor is noticeable in the sauna room, then the spirit of the ‘löyly’ is present. The term ‘löylyn henki’ was also linked to a decorative sauna stone, often formed in the shape of an elf, which starts to throw water onto the stove when heated. A respondent reminisced about how, in

her childhood, she would wait for 'löylyn henki' to come alive, referring to the elf-shaped stone, whose indentation had been filled with water, beginning to overflow. The anticipation of the 'löylyn henki' stone being set in motion was a repeated ritual that initiated the sauna experience. Despite mysticism being related to the notion of 'löyly', most respondents clearly emphasized that they don't believe in the existence of spiritual world. Hence, most respondents remarked that they don't want to use the term 'löylyn henki', since it is considered to refer gratuitously to spiritualism. The following interview excerpt shows how the notions of 'löyly' and 'löylyn henki' are perceived.

Well, it doesn't belong to my world really, 'löylyn henki'. But if I must explain 'löylyn henki', I would say, I would start to narrate some stories of antiquity. [...] Maybe it is some outdated belief or maybe it is something that has been talked about for ages, about 'löylyn henki', knowing that it actually doesn't exist, but... Or has someone believed in 'löylyn henki' for real? Apparently, it's only, according to my knowledge, people didn't necessarily believe that 'löylyn henki' existed, but it rather was a poetic way of talking about 'löyly' and the amicability of the sauna. But I don't believe in that kind of nonsense, I'm not one of those people to believe in nonsense like that. Accordingly, is not a word I would use. (No. 3, female)

Despite the respondents not believing in the existence of the spiritual world, many thought that the feelings, sensations and atmosphere, generated by different saunas, should be attributed to the 'löylyn henki' and the magic of the specific sauna itself: "...different saunas are imbued with different sauna magic. However, I never use the word, but yeah nobody talks about it, but you can sense it, sense the different spirit and magic in different saunas" (No. 7, male). In addition, 'löyly' was understood to magically relax even the most stressed person, and consequently, the relaxing power of the sauna was considered as sauna magic of some kind: "...sauna magic is that weird thing of how water and hot stones and sitting still can create the feeling of relaxation" (No. 5, male).

The concept of suffering for sins, which was strongly related to the sauna in olden times, emerged from the data, to a certain degree. A respondent narrated how they have shared sauna songs within the group of lads, and the objective of the songs was to set the pace of throwing 'löyly'. Pacing the throwing of 'löyly' in accordance with the songs results in the sauna getting warmer and warmer,

which “...makes the suffering even greater and so...” (No. 5, male). Hence, slapping with a birch whisk was considered as a means of metaphorically expelling the sins by intensifying the suffering. A respondent said that every time there is a ‘vihta’ available, he would “...beat myself with it for a while, yes, ‘beat the shit out’ (No. 5, male). This above-mentioned sentence also reflects the belief of how slapping with a birch whisk is considered as a ritual of ‘banishing sins’. In contemporary times, the notion of banishing sins presumably refers to expelling the negative feelings, such as anger and annoyance, through a ritualistic act. Additionally, the following interview excerpts offer an insight into how the suffering within the context of the sauna is experienced.

Well, it (whisk slapping) might be a tradition, which some people like, and it is related to beliefs of purification and slapping your sins out. So basically, these are the reasons why sauna whisks are used. (No. 4, female)

[...] I think it was five years ago. We made birch whisks. It was Midsummer, and we got very enthusiastic about slapping with those whisks. And somehow, the slapping with birch whisks got out of hand so badly, that we repeatedly slapped each other, being like “yes, more löyly!”. And we slapped some more with the whisks. And when we got out of there (the sauna), our ladies were astonished to see our backs looking like they were scourged. The backs were full of red blood streaks. That was quite wild. (No. 7, male)

5.3.4 Boundary Crossing

As discussed in the literature review, the Finnish sauna served as a place to purify a bride-to-be and deceased family members, as well as to give birth in the old days. Additionally, these old-time functions of the sauna reflected boundary crossing, to some extent. Based on the data, there was no clear evidence of the contemporary sauna serving as a place to perform rituals of boundary crossing. All the respondents said that no personal celebrations, nor rites of passage, are related to taking a sauna. However, sauna can be part of personal celebration, but not in a sense of boundary crossing.

[...] *It is not like, 'Let's celebrate this by taking a sauna'. But, it can be part of the celebration. For example, if you have a graduation party with your mates, then a part of the celebration could include taking a sauna and so. But the sauna is not a vehicle to celebrate your personal matters, it is related to annual holiday celebrations. (No. 8, male)*

Even though the bridal sauna was one of the main functions of the sauna in the olden times, only few respondents knew the concept. Two respondents had taken a bridal sauna, when being the bride themselves. However, there was no clear evidence of the bridal sauna being associated with boundary crossing any longer. Both respondents considered themselves as a 'sauna person', to whom the concept of taking a bridal sauna is fitting. A respondent said it was important for her to take a bridal sauna, since she considered the sauna as being an essential part of the hen party: "... *I thought it was 'the thing', which was important for me because I'm a sauna person, so I felt it was important to have it....*" (No. 4, female). She narrated that the main idea for her to take a bridal sauna was to have a profound conversation on married life with her friends.

Both respondents, who had taken a bridal sauna, remarked that there was no repertoire of rituals and magic related to the bridal sauna, thus the function of a bridal sauna serving as a setting for boundary crossing seems to have disappeared. However, a respondent had her friends throwing birch leaves on her skin, which she recalled had something to do with fertility. Even though she didn't have many rituals related to boundary crossing, she enjoyed the atmosphere of the bridal sauna: "...*There was something earthy and rural connected to it*" (No. 9, female). A respondent reckoned she didn't have any traditional rituals of the bridal sauna due to the lack of objects to be cursed: "*No (rituals), because I haven't had too many former boyfriends that should have been burned in the sauna stove or something similar to it, so there was no need for those, no need for those mythological things*" (No. 4, female). However, both respondents knew that there are lots of magic and rituals, such as running around the cottage for six times in order to drive off former boyfriends, to be performed in the bridal sauna in order to assist in boundary crossing.

5.4 Return to Nature

One of the central themes of the subject studied was discovered to be the myth of the return to nature, which is discussed in this section. This myth consists of an aspiration for nature, primitivism and purity. When asked to describe the perfect sauna experience, all the respondents referred to the nature-related characteristics of the sauna, portrayed in the following interview excerpts.

[...] *Preferably by the sea than by the lake (perfect sauna experience). But in an emergency, a lake will do. And the place has to be attractive, and by that, I mean simple, pure and modest, to some extent. (No. 7, male)*

If I should decide now, it (perfect sauna experience) would be a wood-heated sauna, near the ocean [...] With loved ones, with friends. And we would be peaceful, just listening to the sounds of nature and the sound of wood burning in the stove. (No. 6, male)

5.4.1 Nature-relatedness

All the respondents, who had their own or family-owned summer cottages, considered their summer cottage sauna to be the best sauna. When talking about the superiority of the summer cottage sauna, the respondents referred to its attribute of having a wood-heated stove, which provides them with the most pleasant 'löyly'. A few respondents narrated how the electric stove sauna provides a dry 'löyly', whereas the 'löyly' of a wood-heated sauna feels richer in oxygen: "Yes, the difference is that electric stove saunas feel dry and it feels like, like you would run out of air" (No. 9, female). All the respondents said they always take a sauna when visiting a summer cottage: "... Taking a sauna is related to spending time at the summer cottage, almost without exception" (No. 2, female). The respondents had a unified opinion that the sauna is an imperative element within the summer cottage environment, since "all the Finnish summer cottages include a sauna" (No. 7, male). Consequently, none of the respondents was willing to buy a summer cottage, which doesn't contain a sauna. When asked for an opinion on a summer cottage without a sauna, the response of an interviewee was simple, yet meaningful: "Weird. Why wouldn't there be a sauna? I don't understand" (No. 8, male). The following interview excerpts offer portrayals of

how taking a sauna is incorporated and experienced in the context of summer cottages.

You spend more time in the sauna experience, in the whole thing, there (in the summer cottage). I almost feel like the summer cottage is there for the sauna. Because in the end, taking a sauna is 'the thing' there. Taking a sauna, it is one of the main reasons for going to a summer cottage altogether. (No. 5, male)

[...] I guess it (the summer cottage sauna) is the most pleasant because it provides you with such a comfortable 'löyly'. But there is also an emotional side to it, because I love the summer cottage as a place, and for me it is like... well, a paradise is a stupid cliché, but nevertheless, the summer cottage is such a lovely place, where one can rest and relax. It is like a different world and then the summer cottage, I mean the sauna, is a substantive part of the summer cottage experience. [...]
(No. 3, female)

After taking a sauna in the summer cottage, the respondents narrated how they would just 'hang out', drink a beer or a cider and enjoy the surrounding nature. Summer cottage activities related to the sauna context were observed to reinforce the myth of the return to nature: "... (after the sauna) *We often go outside, if it's possible, like for instance campfire, sit by the campfire. And there we might listen to some music and fry pancakes and sing. Yes, very relaxed... And the campfire is always after the sauna, so that you can admire the starry sky when it's dark already*" (No. 2, female).

Based on the data, specific natural elements within sauna consumption, such as natural waters, snow and birch whisks, were identified to be used as vehicles for returning to nature. Many respondents narrated how they like to cool off in a shower, water, snow, or merely by standing outside. Some of the respondents said they like to roll naked in the snow in winter: "*Yes, it's the alternation of cold and hot that gives you great vibes, like going straight from the sauna and jumping into the snowbank*" (No. 6, male). According to most respondents, taking a cold shower in connection with an urban home sauna was used as a substitute for the experience of swimming in natural waters: "...*I get out of the sauna once in a while, and then I take a cold shower, which kind of replaces the swimming in the sea or lake* (No. 3, female). The study submits strong

evidence for how natural waters, as a nature element, and swimming as an activity, were considered highly important when taking a sauna in the summer cottage environment, in particular. These natural elements used repeatedly, and often ritualistically by the consumers reinforce and further reproduce the myth of returning to nature.

[...] A perfect summer cottage, I mean sauna experience, includes swimming, the possibility to swim in the natural waters. And being close to nature and in peace. [...] It is really important, I mean taking a sauna is more fun when you get to swim as well. Even though it's nice to take an urban sauna, but in the countryside, where you're able so swim in the lake or in the sea, that's what I call taking a sauna properly! (No. 3, female)

Yes, I remember when I was a teenager, about 18 or 17 years old, I was hiking in the mountains of Lapland twice and the 'tunturisaunas' (saunas in the mountains of Lapland) were amazing there. [...] But then we also swam in a mountain brook with temperatures of about 10 degrees, so those were quite amazing sauna experiences. (No. 9, female)

The study evidenced that another natural element that is linked with the Finnish sauna is birch, often in a form of a whisk. 'Vihta', or a birch whisk, is a bundle of birch branches, with which a sauna bather slaps himself or others: *"Well, a 'vihta' is made of birch branches.... I guess a bundle of silver birch branches, with which you can whip or beat, either one goes..." (No. 9, female)*. A birch whisk, or 'vihta' in Finnish, was used almost exclusively in connection with summer cottage and holidays. However, the respondents didn't consider a birch whisk as a necessity in taking a sauna, thus birch whisks were rarely used: *"It's like the cherry on top to have a birch whisk, but you can manage without as well" (No. 8, male)*. A birch whisk was seen as conveying nature connectedness and associations with the old times: *"...it feels somewhat ancient and nice, when the leaves get stuck onto my skin" (No. 8, male)*. Some of the respondents presented a contrasting opinion on the usage of a birch whisk by considering it pointless or even a stupid habit: *"No, I don't like to beat myself, that is not the thing for me" (No. 5, male)*. Another respondent described using a birch whisk as follows: *"I could tell them (foreigners) that some silly people like to slap themselves with birch whisks, but I don't..." (No. 3, female)*.

Based on the data, nature-related scents are often incorporated in the sauna experience. Commercial sauna scents are used particularly in the context of urban home saunas. The purpose of commercial sauna scents is to simulate the scents of nature: “... *Here in my urban sauna, I have a tiny rock in the sauna stove... It gives out the scent to the sauna. It’s nice, it smells like nature, or forest, or something like that*” (No. 3, female). Some of the respondents preferred to use only authentic scents of nature. The authentic smell of nature was created by bringing birch branches into the sauna.

[...] *Sometimes we put, our mom just picks birch branches and puts them into some sort of a can and brings that to the sauna, and so the sauna smells like “aah”.* [...] (No. 4, female)

I don’t do sauna scents [...] But when you put it (a birch whisk) into hot water for a while, and then sprinkle that water onto the sauna stove, it gives off a tremendously strong smell of birch. [...] (No. 7, male)

Even though taking a sauna in the summer cottage was reported as reflecting respondents’ desires for a return to nature, some conflicts in experiencing nature were identified, based on the interviews. For example, a respondent described how her perfect sauna experience in the summer cottage is, to some extent, weakened by nature’s elements:

[...] *The sauna at my boyfriend’s summer cottage is almost perfect. I would just change the path into and out of the water. [...] It’s by the sea, and it’s a rocky strand with a flat solid rock, so that going into the water to swim is a bit tricky since there are no supporting constructions. You have to slide along the rock into the sea unassisted [...] And of course, it would be nice not to have mosquitos around, but I don’t know how to get rid of them. But even though it sounds a bit utopian, a perfect sauna experience would include lovely weather and no mosquitos.*” (No. 3, female)

5.4.2 Primitivism

Taking a sauna seemed to convey the ideals of the old times, as a contrast and antithesis of our modern and technology-saturated living environment. According to the data, the Finns don't want to incorporate technology into the sauna experience, even though there are, for example, waterproof mobile phones and radios, available. It is evident that sauna is regarded as a nest of primitivism, and thus deliberately kept apart from the modern world. Almost all the respondents clearly stated that they would never use any electronic devices in the sauna, since bringing technology into the sauna is inappropriate. Even the use of electric stoves in the sauna is regarded as being less acceptable than wood-heated stoves, since the sauna is so strongly regarded as an advocate for primitivism and nature. Hence, although technology is evolving rapidly, the myth of the return to nature, together with its sub-myth of primitivism, is being reinforced and reproduced to resist technological modernity.

*[...] When we were building our own sauna, I said to him (husband) that I don't want to have an electric stove sauna. But he absolutely wanted one. [...] And so, we bought an electric stove sauna. But I still protested, but not enough. And the first time I took a sauna there, *huffs*, no 'löyly' whatsoever! (No. 1, female)*

[...] You don't have any disturbing things, like no television, no other activities. It's just the two or more of us talking to each other. There's nothing more than taking a sauna and what is said. No other factors. (No. 7, male)

Especially in the context of summer cottage life, primitivism was discovered to be a desired element within the sauna experience, and thus being supported by the performance of primitive tasks and the exclusion of modern supplies from the summer cottage environment. A respondent explained that it doesn't bother her if there are no modern washing facilities or even running water at the summer cottage. Lacking these modern conveniences was actually considered desirable: “...not even our contemporary summer cottage includes a separate washroom. Actually, in connection with the sauna, you don't even need one. I think washing in the sauna room is convenient” (No. 3, female). As mentioned before, men particularly prefer to perform primitive tasks, such as warming the sauna with firewood, that are related to taking a sauna:

[...] *Personally, I like to warm up the wood-heated sauna, I think it's fun. And of course, carry water, for example, if I'm at a summer cottage, the chore is like a good thing... Like to carry water from the lake to the sauna, and then to lay a fire and prepare it all. (No. 6, male)*

[...] *Usually warming up the sauna is like 'the thing', it's a nice chore to warm the sauna and watch whether the fire is ignited, and then chop wood, if needed. (No. 8, male)*

According to the interviews, nakedness is considered as a natural and central part of taking a sauna, that also conveys ideals of primitivism and the return to nature. Based on the accounts of the interviewees, the Finns don't consider it embarrassing to be naked in the sauna, particularly when they take a sauna with people of the same sex: "...*You take a sauna naked. If he or she (some foreigner) is about to take a sauna, then I would say that you can also have a swimsuit, yes. But in general, Finns are naked in the sauna; men and women separately, if they are unfamiliar with each other*" (No. 3, female). In an informal conversation over the sauna, a man said he considers the Finnish sauna as the only place, where nudity is acceptable in any situation. He explained that he always takes a sauna naked, even if the co-sauna bather is a stranger, or even from another culture. His employer had asked him to use a towel when taking a sauna in connection with business meetings, especially if the opposite negotiator comes from a country, where nudity is perceived as disgraceful. However, he feels that being naked in the sauna with potential or existing business partners has often broken the ice, and good business relationships have been established in the sauna.

Nudity in connection with taking a sauna doesn't have a sexual reference, since according to the respondents, sauna culture and sexuality have nothing to do with each other: "...*Being naked in the sauna is not related to sexuality, so no staring is tolerated*" (No. 8, male). Hence, it is a strict rule not to look at anyone's naked body, but on the other hand, it is a common norm to be naked in the sauna. However, according to a respondent, sauna might bear a sexual reference in other cultures: "*In those places (saunas in Germany), there was that kind of reference to it. (...) But in Finland eroticism and taking a sauna are, they are different things, they are performed in different places. Hence, the two are not linked together*" (No. 7, male).

It became evident that the Finns consider nudity as an unspoken rule: *“I never wear a swimsuit in the sauna...”* (No.7, male). All the respondents reported they are usually naked in the sauna, except some who might use a swimsuit in a ‘sekasauna’, meaning that there are people of both genders taking a sauna jointly: *“Well it depends. When taking a ‘sekasauna’ I usually have a swimsuit on, but sometimes I don’t, and sometimes somebody else doesn’t”* (No. 2, female). Since it is a perceived norm to be naked in the sauna, wearing a swimsuit in the sauna among people of the same gender was found odd. Consequently, two of the respondents noted that they would understand the exception of wearing a swimsuit, if there was a ‘very good reason’ for it: *“I wouldn’t wonder at it (someone wearing a swimsuit), because I would assume that he has a very good reason for doing so”* (No. 5, male). By endorsing nudity as a natural state of being in the sauna, and openly considering it strange to wear a swimsuit in the sauna, the Finns thereby reinforce the sub-myth of primitivism. Based on the data, it was evident that the nudity of men versus the nudity of women was perceived differently in the context of taking a ‘sekasauna’. When taking a sauna in company of the opposite sex, naked women were regarded as somewhat promiscuous, whereas naked men were seen either as goofy or nasty, yet more acceptable than naked women. The following interview excerpts portray the above-mentioned situation.

[...] *The boys forgot their swimsuits, so they were totally naked *laughs*, and that was fine. [...]* *It didn’t bother me, they were like ‘luonnon lapsukaisia’ (children of nature). [...]* *But for women it’s a bit different, I mean, if there (in a ‘sekasauna’) was a naked woman, I think it would be weird.* (No. 2, female)

[...] *Once we had a sauna evening with the team I’m playing in. There were two girls and the rest of us were men. And you know what! They had nothing on them! [...]* *Sweaty old men, they just walked around like nothing, they had no shame! [...]* *That’s wrong, you should observe this in your study, why only men are allowed to come to the sauna naked! (referring to ‘sekasauna’).* (No. 4, female)

5.4.3 Purity

A strong nexus between the sauna and ultimate purity was discovered in the accounts of the interviewees. The respondents narrated how they always feel pure, clean and fresh after taking a

sauna. By taking a sauna, respondents were observed as fulfilling the need for ultimate purity that cannot be obtained any other way. In the old days, taking a sauna was, in fact, the best way or the only place to get clean or to give birth. The old-time function of the sauna has remained in the minds of the Finns, which is why the sauna is still considered as the purest place:” *It’s like, people have given birth there, so it is a very pure place, and even sacred in some way. It’s a special place”* (No. 8, male). A respondent reported that they had no washing facilities at home while he was growing up. He would only take a shower in connection with school sports, and thus he never felt completely clean. Hence, taking a communal sauna every Saturday was compulsory. According to another respondent, sauna was the only place, where her family was able to have a wash in her youth: “... *I recall we didn’t have any other indoor, like washing systems, so, the weekly sauna was very important in the sense of cleansing. And since we did so much farm work, we had to purify ourselves for real*” (No. 9, female). Even today, sauna is often the only place to wash up in the summer cottage environment:” ...*Actually, in the summer cottage, the traditional function of the sauna, being the only place to wash, has remained until today*” (No. 3, female).

Based on the accounts of the respondents, taking a sauna was considered as providing ultimate purity, or at least conveying the feeling of being extremely pure and clean:” ...*’You must take a sauna once a week in order to get truly clean’ is something my mother said to me repeatedly*” (No. 4, female). The respondents said that taking a shower doesn’t clean as completely as taking a sauna. The concept of sauna’s purifying power is embedded in the sauna mythology, in spite the fact that there are modern shower facilities and effective body soaps that could cleanse the body more effectively.

[...] *You cannot obtain the same kind of ‘after-sauna’ purity in any other way. Yes, I think that it doesn’t matter how carefully you take a shower, it is always different from taking a sauna. Actually, it is even called ‘saunapuhdas’ (sauna clean), it’s like a generally perceived concept.* (No. 3, female)

[...] *It can be that it’s only my imagination, but taking a sauna makes me feel really clean, when I compare it just to taking a shower.* (No. 6, male)

[...] *If you take a shower when it's cold outside, your skin gets itchy and it feels uncomfortable. But if you take a sauna, it's not like that. Your skin doesn't itch, but instead it is soft, and I somehow consider it to be cleaner, but I don't know why. I guess in reality, it's not cleaner, but it doesn't matter, people wash themselves too much anyways. After all, what is purity anyway? (No. 7, male)*

According to the respondents, makeup is removed and a quick shower is taken before entering the sauna room, in order to preserve the purity of the sauna. Taking a quick shower before entering the sauna was observed to be a repetitive ritual: *"I don't want to go to the sauna being dirty, I want the sauna to remain as pure as possible. Because after all, it's a place for purification"* (No. 5, male). The respondents didn't narrate any specific cleansing rituals related to sauna, but instead they attributed the purification entirely to the purifying power of the sauna. However, one respondent said he would occasionally use scrubs in the sauna, but remarked that these occasions are very rare. Another respondent reported that she might contribute to the purification process by scratching the skin in the sauna in order to remove dead skin cells. The respondents were prompted to ponder the reasons why the sauna is thought to cleanse more thoroughly than taking a shower. According to the respondents, the purifying power of the sauna was mostly considered to be related to the sauna's ability to remove metabolic waste, and create different physical sensations. These physical sensations supported the belief in the sauna's purifying abilities. Sauna was considered as cleansing more 'deeply' by activating the entire body, which leads to, for example, to the clearance of metabolic waste, as well as opening and cleansing the pores.

[...] *It removes the metabolic waste from the skin and peels the skin, and because when you're sweating a lot, then the dead skin cells are sloughed off partly because one tends to scratch the skin there. (No. 4, female)*

[...] *I think it's the sweat, which by coming through the skin, removes the metabolic waste and dirt on your skin at the same time. (No. 6, male)*

[...] *You sweat so much there (in the sauna) that your skin is being renewed and all that. Afterwards you feel so much cleaner but I guess it's connected with the rituals and traditions of taking a sauna in order to get clean. It is so thorough. (No. 8, male)*

Surprisingly, the concept of impurity was also related to taking a sauna. The notion of impurity emerged in the respondents' narratives in connection with communal saunas or saunas in housing cooperatives: *"The communal sauna within a housing cooperative building is somewhat disgusting, or something, because all the neighbors sit on the same sauna benches"* (No. 2, female). According to the data, taking a sauna was extolled as the place to obtain complete purity, particularly after physically demanding work, that makes one dirty. The notion of impurity, related to the activities performed before taking a sauna, is portrayed through the following interview excerpts.

[...] *It is such a dirty job (fixing trucks) that if you only take a shower after the workday, all the smell will remain on you, all those chemicals and all, just stuck on your body.* (No. 6, male)

[...] *Maybe after a physically hard job I've been wanting to wash myself thoroughly. For example, after grubbing in the garden, I get the feeling of "today I want to take a sauna".* (No. 9, female)

5.5 Myth of Healing

The myth of physical and mental healing was prominent in the accounts of the interviewees. Taking a sauna was perceived as possessing physical and mental healing properties, that enhance the wellbeing of the body, mind and soul. The findings evidenced that the myth is being upheld through consuming sauna, with the purpose of facilitating stress relief, or relieving the physical pain and tensions, especially after working hard or exercising. The myth of healing was discovered to be reproduced by the Finns through utilizing the sauna as a cure for the strains and aches of modern life. In order to properly deploy the healing powers of the sauna, different ritualistic norms and behavior, such as slapping with a birch whisk and being silent, were employed.

5.5.1 Physical Healing

Based on the data, the sauna was perceived as possessing physical healing properties, which were mainly related to blood circulation, muscles and skin. Overall, the respondents were unsure whether the healing properties of the sauna are actually based on facts, or whether they are merely

a myth. However, a few respondents remarked that the physical healing properties related to muscles and blood circulation are scientifically proven to be established facts. Nevertheless, the study submits clear evidence as to how the sauna is thought to improve physical health and relieve aches and pains, at least to some extent. For example, taking a sauna was observed as sometimes being as a cure for hangovers. Some of the respondents also described how the sauna eradicates the inner cold, particularly after being outside in the winter, that cannot be got rid of, in any other way. The following narratives illustrate the myth of the physical healing properties of the sauna.

It is said that it (sauna) would perhaps like, or I'm not sure, but it is said that it alleviates pain and aches. (No. 3, female)

[...] Whether you are sweaty or cold or there is something wrong with you, then it's like, you have to go to the sauna to get better. (No. 7, male)

[...] Well, I have tried to lead a healthy lifestyle, and so it (sauna) would be a great and delightful way to relax if only I had a sauna nearby. (No. 2, female)

In addition to the overall physical benefits of relaxation, the respondents' accounts suggested that the specific physical benefits provided by the sauna are related to muscles and blood circulation. Exercising was often referred to in connection with the physical benefits of the sauna. In an informal conversation, a woman, who is a fitness enthusiast and a personal trainer, said that taking a sauna is highly recommended after a hard workout, because it does the muscles good. Similar understandings emerged in the data. A respondent described how her mother performs deep stretching exercises in the sauna. In general, taking a sauna was considered beneficial particularly after a workout, since it helps the muscles to recover. According to the study, the alleviation of muscle soreness occurred when 'the heat enters the muscles'. In some cases, the ritual of taking a sauna after a workout was performed repeatedly, although the actual effects on the muscles were not known to hold true, for sure. Therefore, this ritualistic behavior implies that the myth of the sauna's healing properties acts as a motivational factor for sauna bathers to take a sauna in conjunction with exercise.

In many of the interviewees' accounts, the changes in the skin when taking a sauna were characterized thus; taking a sauna makes the skin softer, spotted, red and sweaty. These physical changes in the body seemed to bolster the belief that, not only the blood circulation is ameliorated, but also the whole body undergoes a healing process. The combination of hot and cold, such as dipping into the lake after taking a sauna, was evidently reckoned to promote better blood circulation, as well as muscular wellbeing: *"It is proven that it helps (muscles), the combination of warm and cold..."* (No. 6, male). Another interview excerpt describes the feeling of taking a cold shower right after the sauna: *"...Your body starts to pulse, you can visibly see it in your skin when the surface circulation kicks in"* (No. 6, male). In addition, slapping the body with a birch whisk was considered to enhance the surface blood circulation and remove metabolic waste. According to the interviewees, the ultimate purpose of beating the skin with a birch whisk is to activate the blood circulation and enhance overall health. Consequently, the myth of physical healing was sometimes supported by the act of slapping the body with a birch whisk.

[...] *Your skin is like beaten. It sounds bad, but it actually feels good, and then your blood circulation is enhanced, and the metabolic waste exits the body... At least that's how my mother has justified it, like, I don't think she would have wanted to beat me just for fun *laughing*. (No. 4, female)*

Even though the sauna was unanimously considered to deliver only positive effects on the body and health, conflicting ideas concerning the subject were identified in the accounts of the interviewees. For example, it was remarked by a respondent that the sauna shouldn't be taken when the bather has a fever, despite the belief in the sauna's healing abilities. Many informants mentioned that taking a heavy 'löyly', or sitting in the 'löyly' for too long, might cause dizziness and nausea, as well as the negative sensation of running out of air. For some, the uncomfortable feeling is a sign of reaching the optimal level of 'löyly': *"...You must take a 'löyly' so much that it makes you feel a bit unwell, until it's too hot"* (No. 6, male). In spite of sometimes feeling uncomfortable in the sauna, respondents still wanted to take a sauna due to the ritualistic value and after-feeling of languidness and inner warmth:

(When taking a sauna) I never watch the time. I know, when I've been there long enough. I start to feel my heart beating and blood circulating. [...] It is a euphoric feeling, when your body starts to pulsate, and all the liquids start to circulate in the body. That is the point, when I think it is time for me to leave the sauna. (No. 6, male)

[...] At some point, I'll get tired and a feeling of running out of oxygen, thus I cannot be there for too long. (No. 9, female)

In general, I like to take a sauna at a lower temperature. Nevertheless, taking a sauna oftentimes starts to distress me if I stay there for too long. I don't, it feels like I cannot breathe in the sauna. It is some kind of a physical thing. [...] For me it's also agonizing. That's why I usually don't spend so much time in the sauna. The heat doesn't, temperatures that high don't suit me. (No. 5, male)

5.5.2 Mental Healing

Based on the accounts of the interviewees, the sauna was perceived as evoking feelings of pleasure and relaxation. In addition, the sauna was considered to contribute to mental well-being and healing, by providing a special place to be alone with one's thoughts. The belief that sauna possesses mental healing properties emerged strongly from the data. Some of the respondents remarked that they might sometimes take a sauna purely in order to relieve stress, and to achieve a better mental balance. Even though the socializing aspects of taking a sauna were predominant throughout the interviews, taking a sauna alone or quietly in the presence of others was also preferred and considered to be a meditative experience, thus beneficial for one's mental health:

[...] If I have had hassle and stress in my life, then I might decide to take a sauna, which helps me to relax. So, in those circumstances, I would take a sauna by myself for personal reasons, and I mean completely alone. [...] In my opinion, it's the primary purpose of it, in some way, it is a place for quieting down. (No. 3, female)

[...] It (sauna) gives you the mental benefit of quietness. No music, no nothing. Just a place to be with your own thoughts. (No. 4, female)

Based on the data, sauna is understood as inducing relaxation, or ‘rentous’ as it appeared in the accounts of the respondents. The respondents ascribed the relaxation to ‘löyly’, the mystical and hot water vapor that provides a cure for the stresses and strains of modern life. The sauna was described as a place out of this world, since it excludes the outside world and allows a person to be present in the moment:” ... *It is a place out of this world. It is a meditative place. If you take a sauna by yourself, then you are truly and exceptionally alone with yourself...*” (No. 5, male). Additionally, the sauna was described as a stress-free place, and taking a sauna as “having a break from everything”. In the sauna, one doesn’t ponder about the matters that are stressful, but instead strives to relieve the stress through the serenity of the sauna. However, a few respondents remarked that although the mental healing properties, primarily encapsulated in the notion of relaxation, serve the Finnish people, they might not have the same influence on people of different nationalities.

[...] *It (sauna) calms you down. If you are stressed and going into overdrive, then it brings the level of the overdrive down, more or less, to half.* (No. 7, male)

Sauna is not a place to get upset, or go through stressful things, such as work-related problems, and trying actively to find solutions to them, or overall like actively pondering or furthering other matters. But of course, if you have something on your mind, that might be a negative thing, then you are allowed to discuss those issues. But it is not a place of like “let’s go to sauna and think of our money problems” etc., that is not the purpose. [...] (No. 8, male)

In order to maintain the relaxed feeling acquired in the sauna, respondents reported that they do something ‘light’ and stress-free, such as making and eating supper, watching television, listening to the radio, drinking beer or just hanging out. The myth of the mental healing properties of the sauna is reinforced, for example, by obeying the norm of being silent and discarding alcohol consumption in connection with those sauna occasions that pursue mental healing.

It is supposed to be quiet there (in the sauna), because people ponder there, it is a place for pondering. Because...it (sauna) makes you ponder! (No. 4, female)

I want to gain pleasure in the sauna. Why would I ruin it by consuming alcohol? (No. 8, male)

6 Discussion

In this chapter, the central findings presented in the previous chapter are linked with the theories introduced in the theory part. I will base my analysis on the theoretical framework, which is built on Consumer Culture theory, and, more precisely, on previous researches that are related to the studied subject. Connections and interrelations between the identified themes are explored in the light of the selected theories. In addition to linking the central themes with theories, the objective of the discussion part is to contribute to prior theoretical assumptions of marketplace mythology theories. Since the previous chapter of the findings included analysis and discussion, to some extent, this chapter will present more elaborate viewpoints with regard to the theoretical framework.

Firstly, in this chapter, I will provide deeper insights into employment and reproduction of consumer myths building on Thompson's (2004) articulations on marketplace mythologies. I will discuss how the identified consumer myths are employed and reproduced through ritualistic behavior within the sauna marketplace. Moreover, cultural meanings (Peñaloza 2000) and the juxtaposition of Romantic and Gnostic mythoi (Thompson's 2004) embedded in the sauna marketplace mythology are discussed. This chapter also sheds light on Marshall's (2005) view on how consuming objects ritualistically exposes underlying fragments of cultural capital. In addition, building on Rook's (1985) study on ritual dimensions and Wallendorf & Arnould's (1991) study on consumption rituals, the discussion part suggests that consumers contribute to the process of constructing and reworking sauna myths through rituals, as well as through cultural meanings embedded in those rituals.

I will also provide insight into the theory of the sacred and the profane presented by Belk et al. (1989), by presenting evidence on how the sacred is surrounded by deep cultural meanings and mystery, that cannot be rationalized. I will underpin Belk et al.'s (1989) view on the sacred time and place being created through shared rituals, and I will also contribute to Fernandez et al.'s (2011) perspective on the sacred that is associated with the notion of purity. Lastly, I will broaden our understanding on romantic discourses of nature and, more specifically, the concept of the return to nature and primitivism.

6.1 Marketplace Mythology

Building on Thompson's (2004) articulations on marketplace mythologies, both Romantic and Gnostic mythoi were discovered to circulate in the sauna marketplace. Consequently, competing ideological interests were noticed to be articulated through sauna myths by the respondents. Based on the findings, consumers employ romantic discourses in order to establish nature's externality to technology and culture, as well as to portray sauna as a vehicle for returning to nature and primitivism. In addition, the study managed to reveal how consumers articulate romantic discourses of nature's purifying powers within the marketplace. The findings evidenced that consumers seek amelioration for unhealthy outcomes of urban living and technologization by cultivating naturalism through sauna consumption, and relying on nature's purifying powers. However, Gnostic mythoi, which exhibits technological progress over naturalism, also prevails in the sauna marketplace. Based on the research, romantic promises of nature are enhanced by technological solutions and commercialization providing consumers with, for example, time-effectiveness in the process of warming the sauna. In addition, commercialized sauna commodities, such as ready-to-use pieces of firewood and sauna scents emulating smells of nature, were discovered to be utilized by the consumers, despite the aspiration for authenticity and nature.

The findings of this research support Thompson's (2004) view that marketplaces mythologies convey, interpret and rework cultural meanings and common fundamental beliefs. Building on the research of Peñaloza (2000), this study contributes to the theoretical perspective on cultural meanings acting as vehicles for marketplace mythologies. Cultural meanings of, *inter alia*, nature, '*sisu*', freedom, silence and equality emerged from the accounts of the interviewees in conjunction with the concept of the Finnish sauna. Additionally, and aligned with Peñaloza's (2000) suggestions, the above-mentioned cultural meanings were discovered to be conveyed to the marketplace through mythical narratives. On the other hand, ritualistic activities performed in connection with taking a sauna contribute to the reinforcement and rework of cultural meanings.

Building on Thompson's (2004) and Peñaloza's (2000) researches, this study indicates that one reason for consumers to apply sauna mythology is to protest certain prevailing beliefs and meanings that are considered inappropriate in relation to central mythic premises. The consumers'

counter-arguments, which represent instability in marketplace mythology, challenge and possibly act as vehicles for transforming marketplace mythology through emerging cultural meanings (Thompson 2004). Hence, the study supports Peñaloza's (2000) theoretical view on how cultural meanings are embedded in marketplace mythologies and used by the consumers as a means to assemble and reproduce marketplace. As an example, the self-concept of the respondents was predominantly and paradoxically observed to be based on their 'work identity'. One of the respondents even considered himself "*extremely work-oriented*" (No. 7, male) when asked to describe the fundamentals of the self. However, the respondents were noticed to resist prevailing contemporary concepts of stress and workaholism by expressing counter-arguments through sauna marketplace mythology. These controversial articulations were observed to reinforce and further produce marketplace mythology, as well as embedded cultural meanings, such as nature and freedom.

6.2 The Nexus between Consumer Myths and Consumption Rituals

According to Solomon et al. (2010), even though myths are not based on facts, they continue to exist for the purpose of expressing the core values and beliefs of society. Consequently, and based on the findings, consumer myths exist in the sauna marketplace, which is circulated by salient ideals. In order to accommodate sauna mythology to values, beliefs and needs of contemporary society, rituals were discovered to be used as vehicles for the myth reproduction, since, according to Rook (1985), rituals encompass instructive power to pass on mythical narratives. The findings also contribute to our understanding on how repeated sauna rituals are guided by consumer myths. On the other hand, empirical evidence indicates that by engaging repeatedly in sauna rituals will endorse sauna myths and strengthen consumers' emotional connection to sauna. The findings of this study also support Rook's (1985) view that cultural myths are frequently incorporated in rituals, especially civic rituals, in order to legitimize the existence of a ritual. Building on Belk & Costa's (1998) research, consumers strive to maintain myths by using shared rituals, which facilitate collectively accepted norms and mythologize invented traditions. Furthermore, and aligned with Belk & Costa's (1998) and Rook's (1985) articulations, shared rituals were discovered to enable partaking in sauna mythology and provide consumers with cohesion and sense of communal belonging.

Although Finns have differing opinions on how to take a sauna properly, well-established rituals can be outlined based on the fixed behavioristic pattern of taking a sauna. Taking a sauna is most often performed in private settings, but nevertheless, rituals related to taking a sauna are strongly guided by unconscious and unspoken civic norms. This observation supports Marshall's (2005) and Wallendorf & Arnould's (1991) theoretical views on consumption rituals. Although taking a sauna, particularly in the urban home context, might seem unexceptional and commonplace, rituals were nevertheless discovered to be markers of the mythology (Sassatelli 2007) and medium epitomizing myths and romanticized beliefs (Belk & Costa 1998). In addition, basing on theoretical views of Marshall (2005) and Wallendorf & Arnould (1991), rituals, in this case related to taking a sauna, were observed to convey cultural meanings, such as freedom, nature and modesty, of contemporary Finnish society.

As Fernandez et al. (2011) emphasized in their study, consumer culture, in general, is becoming even more globalized, resulting in cultures' strive for differentiating and strengthening their cultural identity through consumption rituals. Since rituals legitimize the existence of a particular group, the myth of Finnishness, in particular, indicates how sauna is affirmed as a national institution by engaging repeatedly in sauna rituals and promoting the Finnishness of the sauna invention. Furthermore, by taking a sauna repeatedly, the respondents were observed to claim their status as the truest sauna bather and an authentic Finn. Building on the studies conducted by Peñaloza (2000) and Thompson (2004), the fundamental elements of humanity evoke mythic archetypes that stem from cultural meanings, and furthermore, these archetypes are employed and reproduced through consumer myths. The myth of the Finnish man was discovered to possibly originate from the heroic portrayals of ideal sauna men, which emerged in the first half of 20th century and were influenced by romantic nationalism (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Accordingly, some sauna-related rituals performed by the male respondents were discovered to follow the principles of mythic archetypes. Typical 'masculine' chores related to the sauna, such as chopping wood and warming a sauna, were observed to be performed ritualistically by men, which induced the mythic archetype of a heroic man of the woods.

The study found support on Belk et al.'s (1989) research on how the sacred may be enfolded by evil powers that emerge through impurity and illness. Additionally, aligned with Thompson's

(2005) ethnography, the study suggests that the threat of nature's revenge increases susceptibility to impurity and sickness that calls for countermeasures. As already mentioned in the study, sauna served as the only, or at least the most appropriate, hygienic place in the olden days. Still during the Second World War, government propaganda advised Finns to cleanse themselves by taking a sauna and using a sauna whisk instead of soap (Lahtinen 2006). These old sauna customs, stemming from an actual need, might be the root cause for why sauna is considered to possess purifying and healing powers, even today. Supporting Thompson's (2004) view, the study evidences that consumers strive to maintain body's inherent defense system, as well as healthier and purer existence, by engaging in purifying rituals. Consequently, this research contributes to our understanding of how performing sauna rituals time and again produce and reproduce the myth of the return to nature and the myth of healing.

Basing on Wallendorf & Arnould's (1991) and Rook's (1985) theoretical articulations, the study enlightens our understanding of holidays, in particular, being auspicious settings for consumption rituals that construct consumer culture and the marketplace serving as a platform for those rituals. The study indicates that sauna rituals performed at Christmas or at Midsummer are evidently well-established and highly scripted, and thus they follow a certain pattern. In addition to ritualistic scripts, such as taking a morning sauna exceptionally at Christmas, 'sauna holidays' were discovered to encapsulate other ritualistic features (Marshall 2005), such as birch whisks, that were merely used in connection with annual holidays. The findings of this research also underpin Wallendorf & Arnould's (1991) view on how highly commercialized elements are often considered as undesired features that undermine the mythical essence of consumption rituals. Consequently, the study suggests that by weakening the sauna rituals, commercialized products and services also desacralize sauna myths, at least to some extent. Some respondents refused to use commercialized products, such as sauna scents, but instead used authentic scents, such as birch branches, to give out smell in the sauna. Moreover, those respondents, who were willing to use commercial sauna scents, were observed to preserve the ritual vitality by choosing merely those sauna scents that simulate the original smells of nature. In addition, most of the commercial products used in connection with sauna were discovered to be given a sauna -prefix in order to separate those from the ones used in a mundane context. Based on the study, this sacralizing process further produces the idea of sauna being a sacred place.

6.3 The Sacred

According to the accounts of the respondents, the notion of the sacred, as well as sacred consumption, were deeply embedded in the sauna marketplace. Moreover, the sacred attached to the Finnish sauna was discovered to be the engaging factor especially for those consumers, who otherwise didn't enjoy the extreme heat of sauna. Belk et al. (1989) suggest that the sacred emerges from powerful sensations and aspiration for emotions and deeper meanings, described as mystery. Mystery, which cannot be justified through rationalization, is the quintessence of the sacred, since without mystery the sacredness disappears (Belk et al. 1989). The notion of mystery was observed to circulated in the sauna marketplace mythology. For example, based on the interviews, 'löyly', the hot vapor rising from the sauna stove, was described as a mysterious character, which conveys the spirit of the sauna. Basing on Belk et al.'s (1989) theory of the sacred, taking a sauna is a sacred experience that, in addition to conveying mystery, is acted through ritualistic behavior in a sacred place and time.

Interviewees were discovered to follow the principles of the secularization-sacralization process in the sauna marketplace. Even though the Finnish sauna is a seemingly mundane place, the notion of the sacred is attached to taking a sauna through sacred consumption. Based on the study, consumers contribute to the process by sacralizing sauna-related objects, time and place through sauna myths and ritualistic behavior. In addition, the myth of the sauna being a sacred place is employed and reproduced simultaneously with the process of secularization-sacralization. Building on Belk et al.'s (1989) theory, the study contributes to the understanding of how the more natural and pristine a place appears, the more likely it is considered sacred. Accordingly, based on the study, summer cottage saunas, that are consumed in natural and primitive surroundings, were regarded more sacred than urban home saunas. Basing on the studies of Belk et al. (1989), sauna bathers engage in sacred consumption not only by sacralizing, but also by maintaining the sacred. Desacralization of the sauna was noticed to be prevented by obeying and teaching 'sauna rules' scrupulously. Hence, consumers were discovered to engage in socially performed and prescribed rituals, which determine the code of conduct in respect of the sacred elements. The findings also support Belk et al.'s (1989) view that consumers strive to preserve the sacred status through repeatedly expressed mythical narratives.

According to an utterance from the 18th century, sauna is linked with divinity and regarded as a sanctuary (Vuorenjuuri 1967). As a continuum of these old beliefs, the myth of the sauna being a sacred place was discovered to prevail within sauna consumption even today, since consumers strive to maintain the sacred. Building on Belk et al.'s (1989) theoretical articulations, sauna was discovered to be sacralized through shared ritualistic activities, most evidently through holiday celebrations. Based on the research, predetermined code of conduct and reverential behavior, such as purification prior to entering the sauna, epitomize sacred consumption and support Belk et al.'s (1989) view. Additionally, the understanding of how taking a sauna exhibits sacred time supports Belk et al.'s (1989) suggestion that the time spent in a sacred place is transformed into sacred time that usually exists in cycles, for example annually. Based on the study, special and sacred elements, such as birch whisks, are attached particularly to more ceremonial sauna occasions, such as Midsummer and Christmas sauna experiences. Hence, sacred consumption of the sauna occurs most evidently in the context of holiday celebrations.

According to the findings, the concept of sacredness of persons (Belk et al. 1989) is evidenced by consumers' cultivation of the sacred in relation to their body and self in the contemporary context of sauna consumption. The study enriches our understanding of the human body being considered as a sanctuary for the soul. Throughout the Finnish history, sauna has been regarded as a place to purify the soul, and, according to sauna mythology, a soul rests in sauna (Turun Sanomat 6/2015). Accordingly, the study exhibits how taking a sauna provides a sauna bather with ultimate relaxation and mental healing. Since the sacred also conveys the ideal of purity (Fernandez et al. 2011), the body is being ritually bathed and purified. This has resulted in the Finnish sauna becoming a shrine, which provides an appropriate environment for ritual activities of purification.

6.4 Experience of Nature

The concepts of experiencing and returning to nature are strongly embedded in the sauna marketplace, and thus the experience of nature was selected as a supplementary theory for the study. The perspective on experiencing nature within the sauna marketplace is primarily based on theoretical articulations of Canniford & Shankar (2013), who suggest that consumers assemble consumption resources into an entity, from which meanings of nature emerge. The study also

adduced evidence in support of Thompson's (2004) view on how marketplace mythologies induce the notion of returning to nature. One of the central themes of the study, the myth of the return to nature, was noticed to consist of consumers' aspiration for nature, primitivism and purity. These central meanings embedded in the myth are discussed in this section based on Canniford & Shankar's (2013) viewpoint.

According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), romantic discourses are embedded in experiences of nature claiming nature as external to social tension, technology and culture. Accordingly, the sauna marketplace was observed to be framed by romantic beliefs. Based on the study, taking a sauna was considered to convey the ideals of the old times and nature-relatedness as an antithesis of modern, materialistic and technology-saturated way of living. However, the linkage between sauna consumption and technology is apparent, particularly in the context of urban home saunas. On the other hand, consumption experiences in the sauna marketplace were discovered to reproduce romantic ideals. The superiority of summer cottage saunas over urban home saunas was emphasized by the respondents, who attributed the nature-relatedness of the summer cottage sauna to, *inter alia*, wood-heated stove and surrounding nature.

The study supports Canniford & Shankar's (2013) viewpoint on the assemblages of resources. The assemblages of resources consist of, *inter alia*, mythical narratives and romantic discourses that are embedded in sauna rituals. Based on the study, consumers assemble nature by employing and incorporating nature elements, such as birch whisks, wood smoke scent and lakes, into romanticized sauna experiences. These nature elements are assembled most evidently in the context of summer cottages. In addition, by employing nature elements in connection with sauna rituals, for example chopping firewood prior to taking a sauna, were discovered to reinforce and reproduce the myth of the return to nature. Building on Canniford & Shankar's (2013) theoretical suggestions, material elements were noticed to be a prerequisite for the process of reproducing romantic discourse (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Additionally, consumption resources and perceptions of nature were discovered to create a mystic nexus with the sacred nature.

According to Canniford & Shankar 2013, primitive discourses are one of the main discursive resources used to assemble nature. Accordingly, primitivism was noticed to be manifested

through sauna marketplace, since the ideal of primitivism was supported by endorsing nakedness and performing primitive tasks, such as setting a fire into the sauna stove. In addition, lacking modern conveniences, such as running water, in summer cottage environment was, in fact, considered desirable, since it endorses primitivism. Aligned with Thompson's (2004) theoretical suggestions, taking a sauna was considered to possess mystical powers that contribute to spiritual recovery. Based on the study, romantic discourses of nature's healing forces prevail in the sauna marketplace, since sauna is considered to possess physical and mental healing properties, that enhance the well-being of the body, mind and soul. In addition, an old-established Finnish proverb notes: "if the sauna and brandy cannot help a man, death is near at hand" (Mather & Kaups 1963). Hence, the old beliefs of nature's healing powers continue to be interpreted and reworked in the sauna marketplace.

According to Canniford & Shankar (2013), the interference of technology and disagreements regarding how nature should be consumed, complicate the assemblage of nature resulting in betrayals in assemblage. Hence, in relation to the studied subject, unsuccessful assemblage of material and technological resources was discovered to threaten the romantic notion of nature experiences within the marketplace. In the overview chapter regarding Finnishness and the Finnish sauna culture, commercialization as a threat to the authentic sauna within the marketplace was discussed, since saunas are becoming more commercialized and standardized (Vuorenjuuri 1967). Consequently, commercialization tends to overlook atmosphere and quality related to authentic Finnish saunas.

Because commercialization and technology, such as electric stoves, are incorporated primarily in the urban sauna experience, the respondents were observed to emphasized the superiority and authenticity of summer cottage saunas, which provide more appropriate setting for 'returning' to nature and primitivism. However, based on the interviews, some betrayals of experiencing nature in summer cottage environment were identified. As an example of material resources failing to match romantic ideals and desired experiences of nature (Canniford & Shankar 2013), a respondent described how sauna experiences in the summer cottage is weakened by nature's elements, to some extent. The respondent was observed to consider bad weather, mosquitos and the rocky and slippery path from the sauna to the sea as betrayals of nature. However, these

geographic-discursive betrayals enhance the notion of nature's externality in the context of taking a sauna. In addition, the study underpins Canniford & Shankar's (2013) view on how purifying practices are performed in order to preserve the belief of nature as a pristine and isolated realm. Based on the study, consumers seek to maintain and reinforce the primitivism and nature-relatedness of the sauna experience by prohibiting the usage of technological, such as electronical devices, in connection with taking a sauna.

7 Conclusion

Sauna has been an essential part of the Finnish culture for centuries as the nature-loving Finns are particularly fond of taking a wood-heated sauna in their summer cottages. The Finnish sauna mythology can be regarded as a socio-cultural heritage, since sauna myths are being passed on to the next generation through intergenerational learning. In addition, the Finnish sauna continues to be regarded as rather sacred, even though, alongside with its festive attributes and employments, taking a sauna is predominantly related to the context of everyday Finnish life. Due to its mythical sense, as well as the historical and sacred value, the Finnish sauna is filled with cultural meanings and beliefs conveyed through sauna myths, even today. These myths do not only guide the sauna bathers in how to conduct themselves in the sauna, but they are also being reshaped by Finnish consumers. While the previous studies examining the Finnish sauna have mainly concentrated on the historical aspects of the sauna mythology, the reproduction of sauna myths from the viewpoint of consumer culture had not yet been researched. Therefore, I found it intriguing to study the Finnish sauna consumption from the mythological perspective drawn from the theories of marketplace mythologies.

The objective of this study was to construct a comprehensive understanding of how Finnish consumers experience sauna myths, and how they reproduce those myths by exercising sauna routines and rituals. The findings indicate that the existence of sauna myths continues to define Finnish sauna consumption, albeit these myths are not recognized by the consumers to their full extent. Myths were observed as guiding sauna routines and rituals. In addition, sauna myths were found to be influential in how consumers perceive the sauna, and the unspoken rules related to it. On the other hand, consumers are not merely passive recipients of external influences. Consumers also have an active role in the reproduction process of sauna myths in order to adjust sauna mythology to fit with the ideals and needs of contemporary life. The sacred status and rituality embedded in taking a sauna was observed to be the engaging factor, especially for those informants who otherwise weren't particularly keen on taking a sauna. This chapter recapitulates the main findings and summarizes the final conclusions relating to the research questions. After the research summary, theoretical and managerial implications derived from the findings are

presented, followed by the limitations of the research. Lastly, suggestions for further research are discussed.

7.1 Research Summary

A profound understanding of how Finnish consumers experience and reproduce sauna myths was constructed, in order to assist in fulfilling the identified research gap. The most dominant research questions were: What kinds of myths are related to taking a sauna and how do consumers reproduce sauna myths by engaging in sauna activities and rituals? Therefore, the framework of the study mainly builds on the consumer culture theories of marketplace mythologies and consumption rituals. In summary, marketplaces provide a framework for mythologies, that convey and rework cultural meanings and counter-memories through commercial myths – in this case, through sauna myths. Theories of consumption rituals were included in the framework since rituals can be regarded as markers as well as visibly noticeable conveyors of mythology. In order to comprehend the full essence of sauna myths and its dimensions, rituals related to taking a sauna were considered to be a relevant part of the study.

Secondarily, as a supplement to the framework, sauna culture was explored from the perspective of sacredness and experiences of nature, both of them being tightly linked with sauna mythology. As previously mentioned, consumers contribute to the process of secularization-sacralization, by for example, sacralizing objects through myths and rituals. When consumers sacralize or desacralize components related to sauna, they simultaneously interpret and reproduce the myth of sauna as a sacred place. The theory of assembling experiences of nature was reviewed, since romantic discourses of nature, primitivism and purity are strongly embedded in sauna mythology. The key elements of the Finnish sauna mythology were explored by making a review of the historical and contemporary literature related to the topic. The history of the Finnish sauna, the concept of Finnishness, typical sauna consumption practices and the most essential beliefs and rituals related to the sauna were explored through the review.

Data was primarily collected through multigenerational interviews, guided by a long interviewing method of McCracken (1988). The group of respondents was selected to represent as wide-ranging

a cross-section of society as possible, consisting of five females and four males, falling within the categories of young adults to senior citizens. All the informants were native Finns. The interviews, on average, lasted for 57 minutes guided by a semi-structured questionnaire that covered the same topics for each of the interviewees. Even for the most enthusiastic sauna bathers it can be difficult to distinguish sauna myths, since they are embedded in our everyday life and are a part of consumers' unconsciousness, at least to some extent. Hence, the interviewees were prompted to evoke narrative responses and to tell more about the key subjects as they emerged. Secondly, the data was collected by initiating and engaging in informal conversations over sauna consumption, in everyday life situations. The data analysis methods, such as categorization, abstraction, comparison and dimensionalization, as well as the interpretative methods used here, being guided by the principles presented by Spiggle (1994).

This study deepens our understanding as to how sauna myths are incorporated, employed and reworked through consumers' beliefs, rituals and consumption practices related to taking a sauna. The study showed how the consumption of sauna and mythical beliefs are strongly linked to each other. The most significant sauna-related myths identified in the study were the myth of Finnishness, the myth of the sacred, the myth of returning to nature and the myth of mental and physical healing. All these myths were strongly indicated throughout the interviews, as well as in the literature review. Moreover, I found evidence of repeated sauna rituals endorsing sauna mythology and consumers' commitments to sauna culture. In addition, sauna rituals were found to be utilized as vehicles of myth reproduction, in order to better accommodate the wishes and needs of contemporary life.

The examination of the data revealed that Finnishness is the predominant myth related to taking a sauna. The Finns extol the Finnishness of the sauna, mistakenly claiming the sauna to be a Finnish invention. The myth of Finnishness is upheld by reinforcing the concept of the Finns being the truest sauna bathers, and affirming sauna as an institution that defines the Finnish national identity. The findings also evidenced that, regardless of prevailing gender equality in Finland, the myth of the Finnish man is dominant in the context of taking a sauna; the typical 'masculine' chores related to the sauna, such as chopping wood and warming up a sauna, were observed to be performed predominantly by men. Hence, the myth was discovered to uphold a socio-cultural belief that

would otherwise, or in another context, be regarded as objectionably old-fashioned. The study also identified the myth of the sauna being a sacred place. The sacredness of the sauna is being maintained and reinforced by for example obeying and teaching ‘the sauna rules’, and by attaching special features to those sauna occasions that are regarded as more ceremonial, such as taking a sauna at Midsummer.

The myth of returning to nature, and its romantic discourses, appeared in the informants’ narratives. Nature-related summer cottages, in particular, were strongly associated with the sauna, since taking a sauna was noted as being the main activity of summer cottage life. Saunas, especially in connection with summer cottages, represent a return to nature and primitivism, which is highly desired by consumers, who lead technology-saturated lives. Another element of the ‘nature myth’ is purity, consisting of purifying rituals performed in the sauna. Even though the original purpose of taking a sauna was to serve as the only hygienic place to cleanse, give birth and purify the deceased, the purifying power still holds true in the minds of the Finns. The informants were observed as emphasizing the ultimate purity attained after a sauna bath, reflecting the myth of the sauna’s mental and physical healing properties. In addition, the sauna was considered to be a place detached from the hectic life, and providing an ideal setting for relaxation and ‘resting one’s soul’.

7.2 Contributions

In the following section, theoretical implications are discussed, followed by suggestions for managerial implications.

7.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes primarily to the Consumer Culture theory by broadening our understanding on how myths are employed and reproduced by Finnish consumers within the context of sauna marketplace. Moreover, the research explores how Finnish consumers engage in and rework sauna myths through rituals. Building on Thompson’s (2004) articulations on marketplace mythologies and Romantic and Gnostic mythoi prevailing in marketplaces, the study endorses the perception of

how the two opposite mythoi coexist within a marketplace. Consequently, competing ideological interests were discovered to be conveyed through sauna myths. The respondents were observed to articulate romantic discourses proposing nature, as well as the sauna, as external to technology, and, in addition, possessing purifying powers. However, Gnostic mythoi also prevails within the sauna marketplace, in which technology and commercialized commodities exist despite the aspiration for returning to nature.

The approach of looking into the phenomenon from the consumer culture perspective provides a valuable insight into how consumers are regarded as mythmakers in a marketplace. Building on Thompson's (2004) view on marketplace mythologies, the research suggests that consumer myths reflect beliefs and ideals of society, and thus they are constantly reworked in order to apply to changing conditions and cultural meanings of contemporary life. In addition, this study contributes to the theoretical view on cultural meanings presented by Peñaloza (2000). Based on the study, cultural meanings were noticed to act as vehicles for mythical narratives. The study also provides endorsement to the perception of how cultural meanings, such as purity and equality, are deeply embedded in marketplace mythologies. Additionally, and aligned with Peñaloza's (2000) suggestions, the study supports the idea of how consumers contribute to the process of reproducing cultural meanings that, on the other, contributes to the production and reproduction of marketplace mythologies.

This study sheds light on Marshall's (2005) and Wallendorf & Arnould's (1991) view on how consuming objects ritualistically reflect and produce underlying cultural meanings and ideals of contemporary society. Consequently, the study reveals how rituals accommodate prevailing ideals and cultural meanings to consumer myths. Building on Rook's (1985) research on ritual dimensions and Wallendorf & Arnould's (1991) research on consumption rituals, this study deepens our understanding on how consumers perform an active role in constructing and reworking sauna myths through ritualistic behavior. In addition, the study helps to gain an insight into ritual's instructive power to pass on mythical narratives and appropriate behavior (Rook 1985; Wallendorf & Arnould 1991).

The study adduced evidence in support of the theoretical articulations of Belk et al. (1989), suggesting that the sacred is not an outcome of rationale, but instead emerge from an aspiration for deeper meanings and emotions. Underpinning Belk et al.'s (1989) research on the sacred and the profane, the study discovered that taking a sauna is regarded as a sacred experience, mainly because the purpose of sauna baths is complemented with deep meanings and mystery, that cannot be rationalized. In addition, Belk et al. (1989) suggest that the time spent in a sacred place is transformed into sacred time. Accordingly, the respondents were observed to create sacred place and sacred time within the sauna experience primarily by performing shared rituals. The rituals, which endorsed the sacredness of the sauna, were performed particularly in connection with holiday celebrations. Supporting Fernandez et al.'s (2011) perspective on the sacred being associated with the notion of purity, the study evidences how consumers consider the body as a sanctuary for the soul, which results in the need of purifying rituals and the sauna becoming a shrine for purification. The findings regarding how the sacred is experienced and maintained in the sauna marketplace enrich our understandings about similar phenomena in other consumer domains.

Romantic discourses of nature and, more specifically, the concept of returning to nature are evidently incorporated in the sauna marketplace through marketplace mythology. Building on Canniford & Shankar's (2013) articulations on experiencing nature, the study sheds a light on how sauna bathers harness nature by assembling consumption resources into a totality, from which the meanings of nature emerge. Based on the study, assemblages of resources, consisting of, for example, mythical narratives and romantic discourses, are embedded in ritualistic behavior. Additionally, consumers assemble nature by employing nature elements, such as birch whisks, in the romanticized sauna experience. The study also adduces evidence in support of Thompson's (2004) view on how marketplace mythologies convey the concept of the return to nature. The romantic belief of nature's healing forces was discovered to prevail in the sauna marketplace. Consequently, and aligned with Thompson's (2004) view, taking a sauna was considered to possess mystical powers that contribute to spiritual recovery.

7.2.2 Managerial Implications

My thesis provides business operators with a useful knowledge of sauna myths, and how they are incorporated in Finnish consumers' sauna consumption. As a practical contribution to the business world, the study discovered how sauna myths contribute to sauna consumption, and provide insights into how to take advantage of sauna myths by turning them into selling points. In general, the identified myths, and cultural meanings attached to them, can be exploited by marketers in order to engage Finnish consumers more in sauna-related consumption, and to promote sauna commodities more appealingly. Companies operating in the field of sauna consumption could attract new customers, and retain existing customers, by appealing to prevailing sociocultural values and beliefs through applying sauna myths to marketing efforts. In addition, customer segmentation could be carried out on the basis of existing sauna myths; as an example, companies pondering customer segmentation could benefit from the findings, according to which, the myth of the Finnish man was surprisingly powerful within the sauna marketplace. Consequently, companies could use this insight in target marketing in order to appeal to men.

Since marketplace mythologies interpret, employ and rework cultural meanings, sauna myths can be utilized and commercialized in marketplaces in order to attach positive associations and symbolic meanings to market offerings and promotional messages. In order to market sauna-related commodities and services more successfully, marketers should be able to capture prevailing cultural meanings, values and beliefs embedded in sauna myths, and turn them into cornerstones of marketing efforts. Furthermore, business operators can gain a competitive advantage by taking an active role in the reproduction process of sauna myths. The better a commercial myth is adapted to correspond with constantly changing socio-cultural values and beliefs, the easier it is accepted by the consumers. Hence, being proactive in myth reproduction and acting as a marketplace "mythmaker" is recommended for business operators.

Referring to the myth of returning to nature within the context of the Finnish sauna, business operators could benefit from incorporating more nature-related elements into urban saunas. It became apparent that the respondents felt overly exposed to technology, which prompted them to seek a return to nature and primitivism through sauna consumption. For example, a competitive

advantage to a sauna manufacturer could be gained by equipping saunas with nature-related commodities, such as lighting in a shape of an actual constellation of stars. The researched evidenced that consumers prefer a wood-heated sauna experience, because a wood burning stove provides a more pleasant '*löyly*'. None of the informants referred to a pleasant feeling when they were describing the '*löyly*' of an electric stove sauna. Sauna manufacturers could benefit from this observation, for example by simulating, in some way, the sensation of wood-heated '*löyly*' in electric stove saunas.

The data led to the perception that the sauna is seen as the ultimate relaxation place. Based on this observation, sauna manufacturers should emphasize the seating comfort in sauna designs. For example, sauna benches or '*lauteet*', as well as low ceilings, are often designed in a way that makes a sauna bather physically unable to fully straighten and relax the body. Most sauna benches have a stick straight back and nails attached that might burn the skin when heated. With regard to supplementary sauna-related commodities, I observed that the informants linked the word "sauna" with commodities regularly consumed in connection with taking a sauna. This linkage could be of benefit in companies' promotional messages by naming suitable products with the prefix 'sauna'—, for example, by branding beers as "sauna-beers" and sausages as "sauna-sausages". By employing mythical narratives and linking sauna-association to commodities, companies could create more appealing and distinguishable promotional messages, thus gaining a competitive advantage.

Construction companies could benefit from the insights into sauna preferences provided by the study. As regards the summer cottage environment, the informants considered the sauna to be an imperative element. Based on the research, it also became apparent that despite the home sauna seldom being used, many informants felt it was necessary to have an opportunity to take a sauna at home, if they wished. Nevertheless, the informants were not willing to pay much extra for having a sauna at home. Consequently, simple and inexpensive ways to build saunas, especially in apartment buildings, could be a solution. Based on the research, one of the predominant attributes of the Finnish sauna is its status in terms of social gatherings, since sauna was noted as rarely being consumed alone. However, surprisingly, communal saunas in blocks of flats were not seen as desirable places to take a sauna. Business operators should take advantage of the social gathering status of the sauna, by bringing sauna consumption closer to city life, and by

incorporating the sauna into other social occasions. As a great example, an event venue, called Allas Sea Pool, has succeeded in adapting sauna to contemporary consumer culture by combining modern urbanity, Finnishness, nature and socializing elements with public sauna services (Helsinki Allas Oy). Located in the heart of Helsinki, Allas Sea Pool provides consumers with communal, urban saunas, supplemented by additional sport and cultural events, restaurant services as well as easy access to swimming in the Baltic Sea (Helsinki Allas Oy). Calling itself “a one-of-a-kind oasis” and “an awakener of the soul of the spa culture” (Helsinki Allas Oy), Allas Sea Pool has revitalized and re-invented communal sauna habits by exploiting some of the predominant myths prevailing in the Finnish sauna culture.

7.3 Limitations of the Research

The objective of the study was not to make universal generalizations, but instead to discover and understand the phenomenon. Nevertheless, this research limitation should be borne in mind in order to avoid considering findings and conclusions as facts or general truths. Even though the generalization was not the purpose, nor within the realms of possibility, the group of informants was selected in order to be as wide-ranging as possible, including informants with different demographic characteristics. In relation to the nature and objectives of the study, it can be noted that, overall, the research is adequate, since it provides a sufficient and reasonable basis for assessment. Due to the time scarcity, two of the interviews were held in a coffee shop, which could have affected the informants’ capability to answer honestly and freely. Some of the interviews were held at the interviewee’s home, in the presence of other family members, which could have impeded the researcher’s receiving as in-depth answers as they might have been without the presence of others. Since Finnish people are stereotypically privacy-centered, the informants selected were chosen from amongst the researcher’s acquaintances, and the interviews were rather informal. Although this research decision benefitted in gaining more intimate narratives and profound data, manufacturing informality with less interview guidance may have caused some key subjects to remain undiscovered.

The data collection process lasted for only a limited period of time, thus not allowing the researcher to observe how the time element could have influenced respondents’ beliefs and

practices related to taking a sauna. Insights into the reproduction of sauna myths predominantly relied on the analysis and interpretation of respondents' answers and prompted narratives, not on observations. Another limitation to be commented on, is the fact that the researcher had a prior understanding of the phenomenon, since she is a native Finn, and thus an insider of the studied phenomenon. However, using the researcher as a research instrument contributed to the complementation and interpretation of the data. Having said that, the researcher's involvement with the phenomenon could have created erroneous assumptions and constrained the researcher's ability to identify salient themes in the data.

More profound understanding could have been obtained by conducting participant observation, though choosing long interviews as a research method was appropriate with regards to the research objectives. Myths, as well as the cultural meanings related to them, are intangible and abstruse elements of culture, existing in consumers' subconscious, thus making it difficult to uncover them. Especially some self-evident themes might have remained unidentified because of the chosen research method. Therefore, using a participant observation method instead could possibly have revealed additional or even controversial knowledge of innermost beliefs related to taking a sauna. It should also be remarked that there are many ways to analyze and interpret the data; the identified themes and their interrelationships are an outcome of the analysis and interpretation process conducted by a particular researcher. Lastly, the study underperformed in revealing how rituals operate as a vehicle for reproduction of sauna myths.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The study succeeded in fulfilling its primary purpose of identifying contemporary sauna myths and bringing an understanding of how those myths are reproduced by Finnish consumers. The study also delivered an insight as to how Finnish consumers experience and employ sauna myths through sauna activities, and discovered how the sauna mythology is passed on as a sociocultural heritage. Even though the study shed a light on the topic, further studies on commercial mythmaking in the sauna marketplace would deepen our understanding of the interrelationship between competing commercial forces and myth reproduction. The research gained only a moderate understanding of how discourses of power are conveyed through the mythology of the

sauna marketplace. Looking into the same topic using a discursive approach would provide a valuable insight into the ideological constraints emerging from sauna marketplace mythologies. Although the study indicated that consumers apply sauna mythology in order to protest certain prevailing ideals, more in-depth research into how sauna mythology serves as a platform for discourses of power and resistance is needed. This kind of further study would benefit business operators with, for example, more appropriate marketplace articulations.

The study implied that there are powerful cultural meanings, such as naturalism and family-oriented values, embedded in sauna marketplace mythologies. This raises a question of how sauna mythology reworks cultural meanings and how cultural meanings, in turn, act as vehicles for mythical sauna narratives. Another topic, prompted by the study, to be further researched is how sauna-related consumption resources, especially mythical narratives, are utilized in order to construct an assemblage of nature. In addition, a further study could examine whether there are betrayals and conflicts existing in the assemblage process due to incompatible consumption resources. According to the findings, sauna was discovered to be considered external to social tension and technology. Hence, it would be intriguing to find out how technological resources are combined to assemble nature within the sauna consumption experience. The study could also inspire to further research into the mythical idea of nature revenging humanity, in the context of taking a sauna. Hence, the main research question for a further study could be formulated as follows: does the need for engaging routinely in purifying rituals, particularly sauna rituals, derive from the mythical threat of the revenge-of-nature. Lastly, the study identified the myth of sauna being a sacred place, which raises the question of how consumers sacralize sauna components, and whether there is any desacralization occurring in the marketplace that causes a threat to the sacredness of the sauna. Consequently, the phenomenon should be looked into from the perspective of the secularization-sacralization process, which prevails in several other domains of the contemporary consumer culture.

Carrying out an otherwise similar study, except that it could select exclusively foreign-Finns as informants, would provide a novel and intriguing perspective to the topic. For a native Finn, taking a sauna is an inborn and rarely questioned habit. On the contrary, for a foreign-Finn, participation in sauna consumption practices is either through being urged or pressured by the surrounding

sociocultural factors. Hence, understanding of the phenomenon could be deepened by looking into the same topic from a non-native perspective. In addition, further research on the reproduction of sauna myths could be conducted from the perspective of marketplace stakeholders, other than consumers. For example, such primary stakeholders of the marketplace as sauna manufacturers, venue and event service providers, healthcare providers and construction companies were not empirically included in the study. Since the data was collected within a short period of time, another idea for future research would be to observe the changes in sauna mythology for a longer period of time, in order to understand more profoundly the reproduction process of sauna myths. A longer time frame could also benefit by gaining an in-depth understanding of how changes in contemporary life are reflected in sauna consumption, and further, how sauna myths are applied to fit the altered beliefs.

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Appendix 1. Interview Structure

Background questions

- Name, age, occupation, where do you live
- What are your favorite hobbies?
- Can you describe the kinds of things that make you who you are today?

Throughout the interview please pretend I am a foreigner to whom sauna is an unfamiliar concept.

Consumption of sauna

1. Could you describe the mysterious custom of taking sauna? Why is it such a popular custom in Finland?
2. Where do you take a sauna? Could you describe the saunas you go to?
3. Have you taken a sauna since your childhood?
 - a. Have there been any differences in your sauna activity depending on your life stages?
 - b. Has the sauna experience remained the same?

Sauna practices

4. Describe some of the things you associate with sauna?
5. Describe the things you do to prepare for sauna?
6. Describe how you take sauna?
 - a. Where do you prefer to sit?
 - b. Can you describe the role of beauty treatments associated with sauna (e.g. mud masks)?
7. Do you have something with you when you go to sauna?
 - a. Do you relate any specific goods to sauna?
 - b. Have you ever purchased a sauna experience or anything for sauna?
 - c. Could you describe what a vihta or vasta is?
8. What do you do after sauna?
9. Describe how sauna may differ in the summer versus the winter?
 - a. How important is swimming in connection with sauna?

Sauna traditions

10. As a child did you learn any routines or traditions regarding sauna?
 - a. Are you still following these traditions and rules or have they changed? If so, how?
 - b. Describe your memories of a childhood sauna?
11. Are there any rules you relate to taking a sauna? Is there something you're not allowed to do in sauna?
12. Describe a perfect sauna experience.
13. Are there any specific occasions/ holidays in which you feel the sauna experience should be incorporated?

Communal vs. the individual side of sauna

14. Describe how the experience of sauna is different when you are alone versus with others?
15. Describe when you might prefer sauna alone versus communal sauna?

- a. With whom do you take sauna?
 - b. If there are many 'saunoja' (sauna bathers), is there a specific order in which you should go to sauna?
 - c. Have you ever been to sauna with a seating order? If so, please describe.
 - d. Describe the sorts of things you talk about in sauna? What are you thinking of if you're taking a sauna by yourself?
16. How important is sauna to your family?
17. Tell me a story about a sauna experience that has imprinted itself on your mind?
- a. Have you ever been to a party with organized sauna? Could you tell me about that?

Physical and psychological aspects of sauna

18. What do you feel in sauna? How about afterwards?
- a. Describe what it might compare with?
19. How does sauna affect your mind versus your body?
- a. Are there any benefits of taking sauna? Tell me about them?
20. What does sauna mean to you?
- a. Do you feel that sauna is part of who you are? In what ways?
21. How would you describe the innermost idea of sauna to a foreigner?
22. What would you feel if I told you that from now on you are prohibited from going to sauna?

Myths and Mythology

23. Do you relate purification with taking a sauna? How?
24. Do you relate 'suomalainen sisu' with taking a sauna? How?
- a. What do you think about Timo Kaukonen who beat the Russian competitor in the sauna World Cup but was seriously burnt?
25. Could you describe 'löyly' and 'löylyn henki'?
26. Do you consider taking a sauna as a part of Finnishness?
- a. Describe what Finnishness means to you?
 - b. Describe / Do you feel forced to take a sauna as a Finn?
 - c. Please tell me some jokes related to sauna?
 - d. How do you feel about a home without sauna?
 - e. How do you feel about a summer cottage without sauna?
 - What sorts of activities at a summer cottage are associated with sauna?
 - How is sauna different at home from at the summer cottage?
27. Can you describe sauna magic (e.g. Midsummer, bridal shower, sauna elf)?
28. In just a few words, can you tell me what the main reasons are why you take a sauna?